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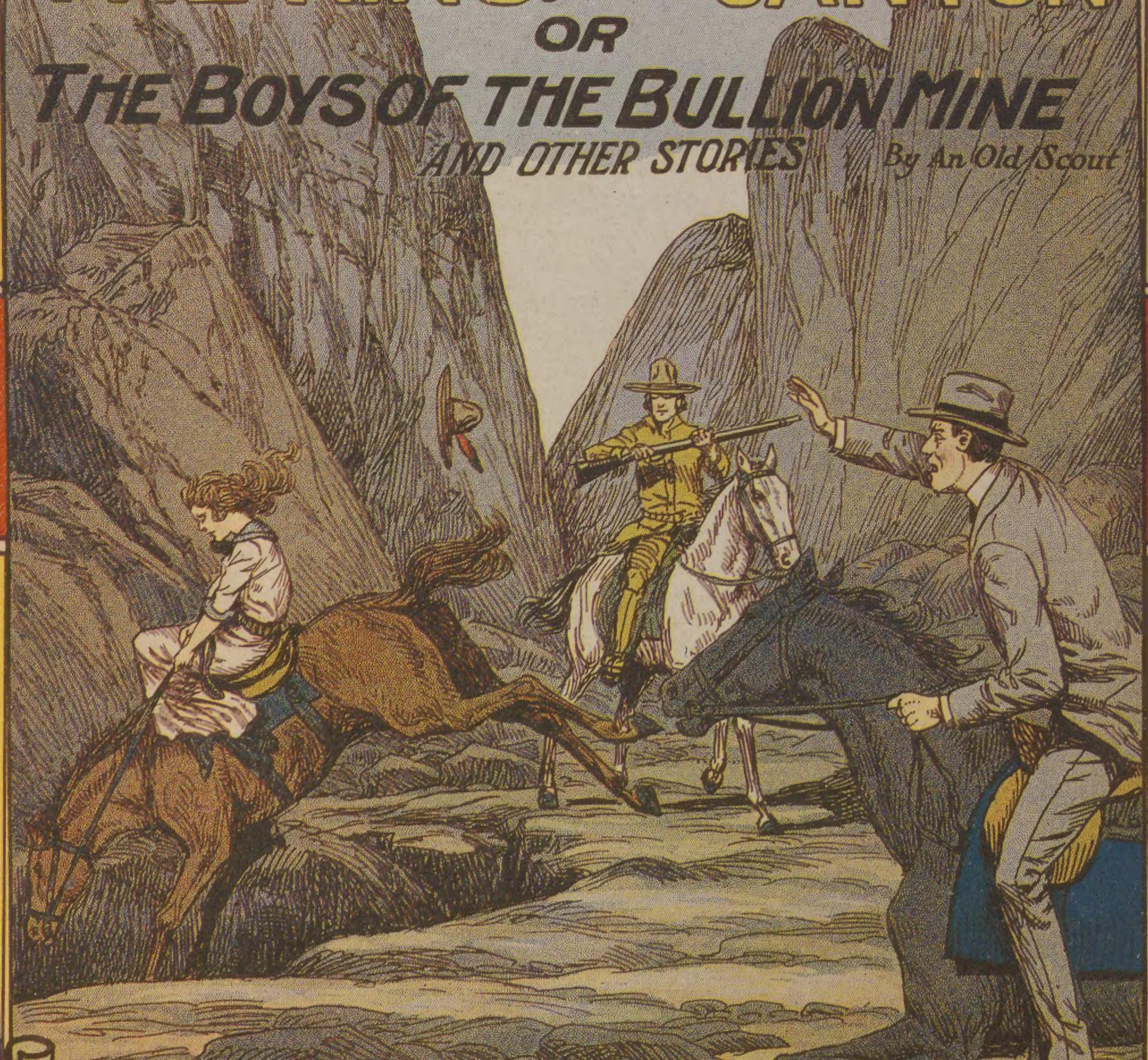
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PLUCK AND LUCK

THE KING of the CANYON OR THE BOYS OF THE BULLION MINE

AND OTHER STORIES

By An Old Scout



On dashed the horse toward the fatal spot. Ned saw the frightened animal and his fair rider disappear. "Dead!" cried the young man with a despairing gesture. Then suddenly he threw up his rifle.

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PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure

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THE KING OF THE CANYON

—OR—

THE BOYS OF THE BULLION MINE

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE BANK.

When the Spokane stage stopped at Gander's Gully it was an hour after dark, and the one passenger who alighted had to grope his way along the rough, unlighted street looking for the hotel.

It was a puzzle to tell which way to go, for the stage stops at the bridge and then proceeds on its way up Black Tail Canyon—this to avoid turning on the narrow Main street of Gander's Gully in the darkness, which is certainly a very dangerous thing to do.

Perhaps none of our readers have ever heard of Gander's Gully—probably so, we might say, for the little mining supply town at the mouth of Black Tail Canyon cannot be called a place of sufficient prominence even to get down on the map.

Gander's Gully, be it understood, is well up toward the northern end of Idaho, right in the heart of the most picturesque part of the Rocky Mountain range at the very head waters of the Lolo Fork of the Columbia River.

It is a wild country altogether.

It abounds in mines and miners—the latter usually on a strike—Indians, toughs, bears—both grizzly and black—rattlesnakes, and outlaws.

In the early days of the gold discovery up Black Tail Canyon Gander's Gully used to be as lively a town as one could wish to see, and it was a "cold day" when there was not one man killed in the wide-open gambling houses, and oftener it was two or three, but now that the working mines were all located far up the canyon, everything was changed. Gander's Gully was a dead town in every sense of the word, and the young man who alighted from the Spokane stage at the bridge thought so as he pushed his way toward the little fringe of lights against the mountain-side on ahead.

It was no wonder that Main street, Gander's Gully, was narrow. It could not well be anything else.

On one side was the rise of the mountain, on the other Gander's Creek went tearing through the gully full up to the street level in times of freshet, and a deep, ugly hole when things were dry, as was the case now.

The houses and stores were built right against the mountain on one side, and on the other were not a few on wooden platforms overhanging the creek.

This arrangement extended for about half a mile, and that is all there is of Gander's Gully. There is not one cross street in the town.

The stage passenger clutched his little grip more firmly as he left the bridge and started up the hill.

"I wonder where the bank is?" he muttered. "What an odd looking place. The houses all seem to be on the side of the mountain or ready to drop into the river. It is as still as death, too. There can't be many people here, and yet—hello! Here comes some one now."

The sharp rattle of horses' hoofs was heard right ahead, and in a moment five men mounted on mustangs went dashing by. The road was so narrow that the stage passenger had to flatten himself up against the rocks to prevent being run down.

"Good! There's some one alive here anyhow," he muttered, "even if they are using all haste to get out of town."

He had soon reached the line of the stores and dwellings.

Stopping at the first store he came to he looked in and inquired the way to the First National Bank.

"It's directly opposite," replied the clerk, "but you will find it closed."

"I understand. My business, however, is with Mr. Irving, the cashier," was the reply.

"You will find him right there. He never goes out. He lives right over the bank."

"Thank you ever so much. And the best hotel?"

"There is only one. It is further down the street on the right."

"Wonder who that boy is?" remarked an old miner who sat by the stove busy ornamenting the floor with little pools of tobacco juice. "Stranger in these hyar parts, I reckon."

"I never saw him before," replied the storekeeper. "He can't be much more than a boy."

"Looks to be about eighteen. Wonder what he wants with old Irving?"

"Give it up," said the storekeeper, and he turned to wait on a customer who had just come in.

He was right about the boy's age. It was only eighteen, and yet he was tall and heavily built enough to be at least twenty-five.

Crossing the street to the building opposite which, like all the rest on that side, overhung the creek, the boy knocked upon the store door.

There was no answer, so he knocked again, louder than before.

Still there was no answer, and the boy peered through the glass trying to make out if any gleam of light came from the room behind.

There was none.

All was as dark as pitch, but the light from the windows of the store opposite enabled the boy to see the high desks, the brass railing above them, and the big safe in behind.

There was something on the floor well along toward the end of the long room.

"Surely that is a woman lying there," he muttered. "What can it mean? Is it possible there can be anything wrong in here?"

He seized hold of the knob with the intention of shaking the door, when to his surprise it came open at the first touch.

The young man hurried forward toward the object which had attracted his attention.

"Why, it's a woman—a girl!" he muttered. "She is tied up—there has been robbery and perhaps murder done here."

He was at her side in an instant, striking matches, and in a moment had lighted a large lamp.

A young girl of about his own age, as beautiful as a picture, with her deep blue eyes and golden hair, lay stretched upon the floor, her arms tied behind her and a red cotton handkerchief thrust into her mouth as a gag.

She looked pleadingly at the boy, but of course could not speak.

Of course the situation was changed in an instant—just long enough for the boy to get his knife out and cut away her bonds.

She was hysterical and slung to him as he lifted her up.

"Oh, they've gone! They've got the gold dust!" she gasped.

"Oh, what shall I tell my father? What shall I do?"

"Trust me to help you, miss," said the boy in a quick, manful way.

"Who are you? How do I know that you are not one of the gang?" sobbed the girl.

"Oh, I am only the locksmith," he replied hurriedly. "My name is Ned Wilbur. I was sent up from San Francisco to repair the time lock on the bank safe. May I ask who you are and what has happened here? I tell you again you can rely upon me to help you in any way I can."

It was rather a long speech to inflict upon a suffering girl. Just as Ned Wilbur closed his remarks she fell forward.

She had fainted, and would have fallen to the floor if Ned had not caught her in his arms.

CHAPTER II.

NED STARTS ON A STRANGE JOURNEY.

"Shut the door, please. See that it is locked securely. I am Lizette Irving, the daughter of Mr. Irving, the cashier. I will tell you about it, sir. I trust you fully. We are all alone here in the bank. My father has gone over the mountains on business and won't be back till morning; the watchman who was left in charge improved the opportunity by getting drunk, and that's the way it came about."

There was a good deal that was hysterical still in the way Lizette rattled on now that she had recovered from her faint.

"I'm here to help you, miss," replied Ned Wilbur. "You can depend on me, but I am not Mister. I'm only a boy, and everybody calls me Ned."

"You are from the Diebold Lock Company of San Francisco, I suppose?"

"Yes, I am one of their lock repairers. My trade is watch-making. I repair the time locks on their safes."

"Yes, yes. You look so much like a boy I know. Ours is out of order. It don't work right at all. Father wrote to the company about it last week, and they answered that they would send a man down."

"I am the man. I only wish I had arrived sooner—in time to have stood up against these thieves for you, I mean."

"If you had been ten minutes sooner it would have been soon enough. I was at work upstairs when I heard some men ride up and hitch their horses to the hitching-bar in front of the bank. I thought they were going into the saloon next door, so I paid no attention until the next thing I heard a noise below in the bank. I hurried downstairs with the revolver father left me. I was going to look in through a little sliding panel in the door which connects with the hall so as to see what was going on inside, when all at once I was seized by two men. They tied me up and gagged me, and dragging me into the bank they left me where you found me. It was terrible! I'm almost wild about it. I—I—"

"Keep cool," said Ned. "Did they steal anything? I notice they have not broken into the safe."

"They took twenty bags of gold dust worth at least a thousand dollars each, which came in just before the bank closed. They must have known that it was deposited, and that father was away. You see we have not been able to open the safe for a week or more, and for that reason the business of the bank has practically stopped. The gold dust was locked up in that closet. You see the door has been forced open. They must have known that it was there."

"There were five of them?"

"Yes."

"And you say they've only just gone?"

"Yes, not ten minutes."

"I saw them. They passed me on the road up from the bridge. Will your father be held responsible for this?"

"He will. He gave his own guarantee for the safety of the money. Every one trusts father. He has done the same thing twenty times. It will ruin him if I can't get the money back."

"But how can you get it back?" demanded Ned, rather surprised at the tone in which the girl spoke.

"I can get it back if I had any one to help me," she added confidently. "I'm sure I can."

"But how? Do you know these men?"

"No."

"Then how—"

"Don't question me, please. Will you really help me? Can you help me? Do you dare to go up Black Tail Canyon with me to-night?"

It was a startling question, but as it happened it struck Ned on his weak spot, for there was nothing this boy loved better than a wild adventure such as this promised to be.

"It isn't safe to dare me to do anything," he replied. "If you want me to go, miss, I will go."

"Good! Can you ride a horse?"

"I was brought up on a ranch in California. I am more at home on a horse's back than I am anywhere else."

"And you are not afraid to go up the canyon with me? I shall take you right among one of the most notorious gangs of outlaws in Idaho. It will be a trip full of danger, Ned."

"I don't care for that, but how will you stand it? Just now you fainted away."

"I know it, and I'm ashamed of it. I sha'n't do it again. It was the nervous shock, I suppose. I must have that gold back before morning, and I think I know a way to get it. All I want is some one to back me up. But, indeed, I shall go alone if you do not want to go with me. Don't look so surprised that I should be willing to trust a stranger rather than one of my own townspeople here in Gander's Gully. I have no friends here, and I don't want any. Now, Ned—you see I am going to take you at your word and treat you as a friend, which I feel safe in doing, since you came here representing a respectable business concern—I ask you once more will you go with me up the canyon to-night?"

"I will, and there's my hand on it," cried Ned.

Lizette pressed his hand slightly.

"One thing more," she said. "You must give me a promise."

"Anything in reason."

"You must promise not to ask me a single question nor to question anything I may do."

"I promise that. I am just to act as your escort—nothing more?"

"That is it."

"Again I promise."

"That's enough. Now go to Brown's livery-stable and hire a horse. Tell them I sent you, and it will be all right. You have money?"

"Plenty."

"We will settle up the expenses to-morrow when you meet father."

"And you. What about your horse?"

"I have my own. It is in our barn down the street. Be here in twenty minutes and we will make a start. Of course, I need not say to you not to mention anything about what has occurred."

"I sha'n't forget, but one question?"

"Stop! You promised you wouldn't ask any."

"I merely wanted to inquire if you know who these thieves are?"

"You asked that before. If I did not know something I should have no hope of recovering the money. Now, Ned, if you feel that you must ask questions, our deal is off."

"Not another one!" cried Ned. "I'm with you, Lizette. I shall do just as you say."

Twenty minutes later Ned Wilbur, instead of sitting down to a comfortable supper at the hotel in Gander's Gully, went dashing over the bridge by the side of the cashier's pretty daughter.

On the other side of the creek they turned up the canyon trail, and riding in between two towering walls of rock, pushed on into the darkness.

It was a strange situation for Ned Wilbur.

He wondered how it was all going to end.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE BREACH IN THE TRAIL.

For a matter of five miles or more Ned Wilbur and Lizette Irving rode on up the dark canyon in comparative silence.

It was indeed difficult to talk and make one's self heard, for the ring of the horse's hoofs upon the hard, rocky floor of the trail awoke the echoes sharply.

It was like the ring of iron upon a blacksmith's anvil, and drowned all other sound.

As soon as they were fairly in the canyon, Lizette produced a small dark-lantern with a powerful reflector attached, which was provided with an ingeniously arranged hook to fasten it to the pommel of the saddle.

As Lizette rode in advance this lantern threw a strong light forward on their path and enabled them to see just where they were going.

This was quite necessary, for the trail was an exceedingly dangerous one to cover in the dark.

On one side the left wall of the canyon towered above their heads to a height of several thousand feet, while on their right, at a depth of at least a hundred feet below the trail, Black Tail Creek went rushing over its stony bed to make its way through many miles of dreary wilderness to the headwaters of the Columbia River, and so on to the Pacific Ocean.

Such was Black Tail Canyon, or at least a part of it, for this vast break in the mountain presented many ramifications, and extended far into the heart of the range.

For the first five miles they followed the stage trail which led up to a claim of valuable silver mines about twenty miles further on, but when they had about half covered the sixth mile, Lizette drew rein and called Ned to her side.

"We leave the trail here," she said. "We are going up the cross canyon now. I don't know where this adventure may end, Ned. If you want to back out, now is your time."

"As though I would," replied Ned. "I'm not thinking of such a thing as that."

"I know what you are thinking of, I fancy."

"What?"

"You are wondering what I am driving at, anyhow."

"I don't deny it. So would you if you were in my place."

"But let me tell you right now I shall never explain, and you need not expect it. If we succeed, you will not know how it came about. If we fail we return, and that's the end of it. Now we go right into the heart of the mountains by a trail that is seldom traveled. Look ahead. Do you see that point of rocks almost cutting off the trail? Well, we turn there. Now, follow me and keep your rifle ready for business, for we can't tell what danger we may run against."

Thus saying, Lizette went dashing on again.

Each carried a rifle. Lizette had provided them, and they were first-class Remingtons, too.

Soon they reached the point of rocks and turned through a natural tunnel or space so narrow that there was scarcely room for the horses to pass, and so low that they were obliged to bend their heads.

Thus they rode for a distance of a few hundred yards, when they suddenly emerged into a wider trail extending from one wall of the canyon to the other, a distance of some thirty feet.

Far above them between two vast perpendicular walls Ned could see the stars shining.

There was no sign of a stream here, and what had caused this remarkable break it would be hard to say.

"This is Lost Canyon," said Lizette. "But few know of its existence. Underneath it is said to be a river, although no one has ever seen it. There are points where through the crevices of the rock you can hear it rushing along underground."

Lizette had scarcely spoken when both were startled by a wild cry ahead.

"What was that?" exclaimed Lizette, reining in.

"Come one shouting. I could not make out the words," Ned replied.

"It sounded like an echo of my own words. I thought it was 'Lost! Lost!'"

Just then the cry was heard once more.

Certainly it did sound like the echo of the words Lizette had just used.

"Lost! Lost! Lost!" was what Ned distinctly heard.

"That's what it is!" he exclaimed. "Somebody has lost themselves on this trail."

"Then I wish they had chosen some other time to do it!" exclaimed Lizette pettishly. "If there is anything I don't want it is to meet any one here to-night."

"I guess we shall have to come to it," said Ned, and they rode on at a rapid pace.

Several times they heard the cry, but by Lizette's orders it was not answered, although Ned twice proposed to do so.

After a little they came to a vast opening in the mountain. It was like a great amphitheater and was many hundred yards in circumference.

Out of this opening many canyons stretched off into the mountain range.

Lizette dashed across the open space and chose one on the right.

It was narrower than the canyon they had just left, and

ran in a straight line between perpendicular walls of immense height.

"Lost! Lost! Lost!" the cry rang out behind them as they entered this gloomy defile.

"We have passed him. He is in one of the other canyons," exclaimed Ned.

"Let him stay there," answered Lizette. "Don't think that I am not sorry for the man, Ned, whoever he may be. It's not that, but to attempt to help him now would be fatal to my plans. When we return we will look into the matter and help him if we can."

Ned made no reply. Naturally he wanted to help the sufferer, whoever he might be.

A mile more was covered and part of the next, and again Lizette drew the rein.

"We must be pretty near to the place that I am aiming for now," she said. "It won't do to make any mistake."

She took the lantern from the pommel of the saddle and flashed it about.

"There it is!" she exclaimed. "I passed it. Close there on your left, Ned. Do you see that horn sticking out of the crevice in the rocks? Take it down and blow it, please."

Ned saw the horn and he reached up and got it. A second later the canyon echoed with a resounding peal.

Now, whatever had been Lizette's idea in blowing the horn, the result was certainly very different from what she had anticipated.

In a twinkling her horse, frightened by the sound, took the bit between his teeth and went dashing at furious speed along the trail.

"Follow me, Ned! I'll quiet him in a minute," called Lizette, struggling all she knew to gain control of the frightened beast.

Ned urged his own horse after her.

In a moment the canyon took a sharp turn, and Ned, looking forward, saw a bright light shoot up ahead which illuminated the trail almost with the brightness of day.

Some twenty yards beyond stood a splendid black horse upon which sat a youth dressed in an Indian buckskin coat and breeches with a large Mexican sombrero upon his head.

He was young and exceedingly handsome of feature, while his hair hung down over his shoulders to a great length.

"Back! Back!" he shouted. "Not a step further, Lizette, or you are lost. There has been a cave-in here and the trail is all dropped away!"

Lizette made no reply. The horse was entirely beyond her control.

On it dashed toward the break.

"Jump! Jump and try to save yourself," the young man cried.

Useless!

On dashed the horse toward the fatal spot, and Ned to his horror saw the frightened animal and his fair rider disappear like a flash.

"Dead!" cried the young man with a despairing gesture.

Then suddenly he threw up his rifle and, covering Ned, shouted:

"And you die, too! I'm the King of the Canyon. No stranger ever passes here!"

CHAPTER IV.

LOST IN THE CANYON.

"Crack! Crack!"

Twice the rifle rang out through the canyon.

Ned's horse got the first shot in the breast, but the second was a miss.

The horse reared and with a wild snort plunged forward. The animal was evidently maddened with pain.

It paid absolutely no attention to the break in the path, but sprang into it, and went whirling down into the depths which had swallowed up his mate and poor Lizette Irving but a few moments before.

On the other side of the break the young man who had called himself the King of the Canyon watched all this in grim silence.

He could see the body of Ned Wilbur lying upon the trail where he had fallen at the firing of the second shot.

"Dead!" he muttered. "Well, I don't know who he is. I can't even guess why Lizette brought him here, but seeing that she is dead there was no alternative but to do him up, too. It would have brought destruction upon us all to have allowed him to escape."

Having thus spoken half aloud, the King of the Canyon threw one searching look down into the hole.

It was not more than twenty feet deep.

At the bottom a swift, dark stream went running under the rocks.

This was the famous "Lost River" which Lizette had spoken about.

By some it was believed to be the Lolo branch of the Columbia, whose exact origin no one knew.

Little, indeed, was known about it by any one, and by most people at Gander's Gully and in the vicinity of the adjacent mining camps its existence was doubted, and "Lost River" was put down as an Indian myth.

Evidently the King of the Canyon saw nothing to hold his attention here any longer.

He wheeled his horse about and went dashing back along the trail.

Rounding a sharp bend in the rocks a moment later, he disappeared.

It was not until he was well out of the way that any movement was made by the silent form which he had left on the trail on the other side of the break.

Then Ned Wilbur suddenly arose and with unsteady step approached the edge of the hole.

Ned had not been shot. He was not injured in any way, but naturally was terribly shaken up by what had occurred.

As soon as the King of the Canyon covered him with his rifle Ned realized that quick action alone would save him from death, and with the first shot he threw himself from his horse—a trick which he had learned long ago in his ranching days in California.

The rest followed.

Ned was simply "playing possum."

It was well that he did so, for this alone, in all probability, saved his life.

"It is a terrible thing," he murmured, as he looked down upon the lost river. Here but a moment ago and gone now no one knows where. Such a charming girl! I never in all my life saw one so handsome. What does it all mean? Who was that fellow? He tried to save her, but he was willing enough to kill me. Of course, he must have been one of the thieves—and yet that cannot be, either, for if he had robbed her she would hardly have come all the way up here into the mountains to appeal to him, and I can't doubt that he was the person she came to see."

It was all a mystery.

Ned could make nothing out of it.

The light had vanished with Lizette's lantern and the one carried by the "King."

One thing remained certain—Ned was here in the heart of the mountain in the dead of night, deprived of his horse and in danger of his life from Indians, outlaws, or wild beasts.

It was a situation serious enough to discourage any one.

"I must make my way back to Gander's Gully just as fast as I can," determined Ned, and without wasting time in further reflection he started back along the trail.

It was anything but a lively walk for Ned for the next half hour or so.

It was pitch dark and his mind was full of the horror of poor Lizette's fate.

The silence of the deep canyon was terribly oppressive.

Not a sound was to be heard but the echo of the boy's own footsteps, and the only visible things were the glittering stars far, far above his head.

So it remained until Ned at last found himself back in the great amphitheater or "nick," as these deep holes in the mountains are called in the Far West.

Here for a moment he thought the situation had changed for the better, for the moon had just begun to show itself above the towering walls, and the whole interior of the sink was bathed in a flood of soft light.

"This will let me out," thought Ned. "Thank heaven for it. Let me see, which way do I go?"

Here was trouble right up to him again.

There were eight different canyons opening off from the sink.

Which was the one leading back to Black Tail Canyon, the regular trail, Ned had not the most remote idea.

He made the round of the sink and surveyed them all.

It looked alike everywhere.

The floor of the different canyons was hard limestone over which horses might pass till doomsday and leave no trail.

Of course Ned had his own ideas about the situation.

He thought that a certain canyon on the opposite side of the sink must be the one, but then he was just as likely to be wrong as right.

It was while he was puzzling his head about it all that he

was suddenly startled by the same cry which had so startled him before.

"Lost! Lost! Lost!" rang out upon the awful stillness. "Does not nobody hear me? Will not nobody be good enough to tell me vere I am?"

"By gracious, if that's a ghost it's a Dutch one, all right!" exclaimed Ned. "Now is my chance to get a companion in misery, at all events."

"Hello! Hello! Where are you?" he yelled.

The answer to his cry came instantly.

"Hello, your ownself! If I knowed vere I was would I be yelling out for somebody to find me? Who was you, mynher, and vere was you? I tell you I was lost! lost! lost!"

"Stay where you are. Keep on calling, and I will try and find you," shouted Ned.

"And dat same I will do with de greatest pleasure," answered the voice. "Here! Here! Dis vay! Dis vay! Mebbe you know de vay, but it's a plame sight more dan I do! Hello! Hello! Hello!"

Ned's "Dutch ghost" having got started kept it up right lively.

There was no lack of noise in the canyon now.

After listening attentively for a few minutes Ned was able to locate the direction in which the sounds came from.

He crossed over the sink and entered a certain canyon.

He had hit it right at the start.

The sound was twice as loud now, and evidently proceeded from right up the canyon at no great distance away.

"Are you up here?" yelled Ned.

"I guess I must be," was the answer. "I'm blamed if I know."

"Have you got a light? If you have, show it."

"How could I haf a light? Do you think dat I carry a lamp schtore in mine pocket? No, mynher, I haf no—"

At this instant the words of the unknown were drowned by the most awful sound Ned had ever heard since the day of his birth.

It was half roar, half shriek, half bellow.

Twice it broke the echoes of the canyon.

Ned's heart stood still.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the unknown.

Everybody has some superstition in his make-up, and Ned Wilbur had his share.

He turned on his heel and ran back along the canyon when the frightful sound came again.

CHAPTER V.

DIRCK VAN POTS, PEDDLER.

"Hello! Hello! Vas you running away to leave me?" the voice of the "Dutch ghost" shouted in accents which showed that he was quite as much excited as Ned himself.

Ned stopped, ashamed of his own fears.

"In heaven's name what was that awful noise," he called out.

Then the laugh came again.

"Dat!" cried the voice. "Vy, dat's only von pig jackass vat I did ride into dis debbil's den."

"Well, and here's another, I guess," muttered Ned to himself. "To be sure I never happened to hear a jackass bray before, but I might have known what it was for all that."

"I'm coming on," he added aloud. "I will be with you in a minute now."

He pushed forward along the canyon and soon came in sight of the object of his fears.

There stood a white jackass with immensely long ears and a stubby tail dimly seen in the moonlight.

Two great peddler's packs were thrown across the saddle, and by his side stood a little man with a hatchet face, hunch-backed, with his shoulders up almost against his ears, while to make his appearance still more ridiculous he wore on the back of his head a high silk hat, while a huge pair of cowboy boots came up almost to his middle.

"T'ank heaven you haf found me!" he exclaimed. "I don'd care vere I was now so long as I was found."

There was something so very comical about the fellow that in spite of the way he felt Ned could only lean back against the wall of the canyon and laugh.

"Don't know that you have made very much by being found by me, neighbor," he said. "The fact is I am lost myself."

"No! You don't say? Dot vas too pad."

"It's a fact, though."

"Vorse and vorse. Den id's a case of von plame pig fool trying to hellup anoder."

"I can't say I admire the way you put it, but it's about true just the same. What is your name?"

"My name? Vy, my name vas Dirck Van Pots, dat ish vot my name vas. Und my peezness, if you vant to know, ish a peddler. I vas from Rotterdam, vonce many years ago, but now I hails from Spokane. Can't I sell you sometings? Vant any suspenders, neckties, fine undervare von hundret and feefty per cent, vool every tread of dem; den dere's trousers und overhauls, any old ting you vish."

Evidently Mr. Dirck Van Pots was out for business first, last, and all the time.

He commenced to open his pack then and there in the moonlight, still rattling away about the goods.

"Hold on!" cried Ned. "I don't want to buy anything, boss. What we both want is to get out of this fix."

"Of course, of course, but vile ve are in de figs if ve can do a leedle schtroke of peezness vat's de matter mit doing it? Answer me dot."

"I tell you I don't want any of your goods."

"Dere's writing-paper und postage stamps und envelopes. Efery young feller vot's goot looking like you vants to write letters to deir gals. Vat's de matter mit me selling you some, say?"

"No, no! Don't open your pack. I want nothing."

"Vell, vell. All ride. Vatefer you say. Vat did you tell me your name vas, poy?"

"I didn't tell you, but I will. It is Ned Wilbur."

"You vas from Spokane, yes? I don't remember to see you there."

"Probably not. I never was in Spokane in my life. I'm from San Francisco."

"Ach! 'Frisco! Dot vas de life town. Vy you not stay dere?"

"I came up to Gander's Gully on business."

"Gander's Gully! Huh! A man vas a goose gander to come dere. De place is no goot for peezness. I went to efery house and only sold von pair of suspenders. Den I start up Black Tail Canyon for de Bullion mine, und dot vas de vay I lose mineself. Und you must tell me how to get owit."

"I don't know that I can do it," said Ned, "but I am willing to try. This canyon won't lead you to the main trail, that's certain. The first thing we have to do is to get there."

"Right you vas. Und you go to de Bullion mine, yes?"

"No, I don't go to the Bullion mine. I am going straight back to Gander's Gully just as fast as I can."

"Ach, vat goot ish dat? I only sold von pair of suspenders—"

"What do I care for that? I'm not selling suspenders. If you only had a lantern in your pack now that would be something to the purpose. But come on. We may as well make a move."

"I tink it would be a very goot idea," replied Van Pots as he mounted the white jackass.

He looked more absurd than ever.

His tall hat scarcely came up higher than the ears of the jackass, while his long legs with their big boots almost touched the ground.

"Geddap, Gold Dust!" he cried, shaking the rein. "See, I names my trotter Gold Dust because I tink dat make a popular name amongst de miners. Ha, ha, ha! Say, vot apout your gedding up behind me und riding? Gold Dust vas a strong jackass. He can very vell carry two."

"No," said Ned. "I had rather walk, and you don't go in my direction, anyhow. I must get back to Gander's Gully, as I said before."

Van Pots urged the white jackass along the canyon without making any further talk until they came to the sink.

Ned also was silent.

He saw no reason for making a confidant of the peddler and telling him of the distressing accident which had occurred at the break.

Ned was one of those fellows who are naturally reticent and keep their affairs to themselves.

Once in the sink, Van Pots pulled in the jackass.

"Now, dis is vere I made de meestake," he said. "Dis is de short road to de Bullion mine out of here, so I comes in here. Vonce I came here before and got on all ride, but dis time I make de meestake. Ha! Vell, I did haf a guide dat time before und now I haf nopoly. Vich vay do ve go?"

Until now Van Pots had not had a square look at Ned, for it had been very dark up the canyon.

Just as he spoke the moon came out from behind a cloud, and the sink was lighted up as it had not been before.

Van Pots stared at Ned, his little eyes opening to their widest extent.

"Hello! Vat! Vat!" he cried. "It vas you! Ha! Poy, you fool me! Who knows de vay petter dan de King of de Canyon, and dat is who you vas!"

"Nonsense! You must be crazy!" returned Ned. "I have seen this fellow who calls himself 'King of the Canyon,' where or when doesn't concern you, but I should think it was only necessary to look in my face to know that I'm not him."

"No? I tought you vas. You look schoost like him. Vere you see him, poy?"

"No matter. I don't want to talk about it, Van Pots. I want to get back to Gander's Gully just as quick as I can. Which one of these canyons is my road? Do you know?"

"No, I don't know, but I tink you fool me—yes?"

"Stop it! I tell you I'm not the King of the Canyon. Who is this fellow, anyway?"

"Who he is, how I know? Dis much I know, you look schoost like him, only you wear different clothes. He vas de leader of a pig gang of outlaws. Everypody knows dat. Vonce he caught me und brought me troo dis blace to Black Tail Canyon ven I gif him tree pair of suspenders und a new revolver. Don't you remember dat?"

"You're an idiot, Van Pots!" cried Ned. "That's what you are, to keep it up the way you do. I'm going this way. Follow me or not, as you please."

"I vould pe an idiot not to follow you den," growled Van Pots. "I don't vant to be left alone here, und I von't. No, no, mynher. You can't lose me. Vere you go I go, und Gold Dust, too."

"Go on, then," said Ned, pointing across the sink to one of the canyons opposite. "I may be right and I may be wrong, but that's the one I am going to try."

Ned was all wrong, as it happened.

He was all mixed up and turned around.

If Van Pots had told him that he was going out of the sink on the same side he had last come into it he would have laughed at him, yet such was actually the case.

Van Pots urged the jackass forward into the dark canyon.

Ned kept close behind him, and they kept on so for some distance until all at once he saw the jackass slip forward as though his forefeet had gone into a hole.

Van Pots was thrown violently against the animal's neck, and he flung his arms around it, shouting:

"Help! Help! Help! Save me!"

Ned seized the jackass by the tail and pulled back for dear life.

He knew now the mistake he had made.

They had gone up the same canyon out of which he had just come.

Lizette's fate threatened Van Pots, for the white jackass already has his forefeet over the edge of the break.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEAD MEN IN THE HUT.

"Pull! Pull! Pull pack! Dere's a pig hole mit vater here!" Van Pots was roaring like a big bull calf.

Ned was pulling away at the tail of the white jackass for all he was worth.

If the jackass had not had sense enough to help himself it would have ended in Van Pots following Lizette to a certainty.

The jackass, however, knew his business, and crowded back until he managed to regain his footing, when Van Pots promptly got off his back and struck a match.

There was the break all right.

Ned had returned to the place from whence he had come.

But a change had taken place since he left. Two tree trunks spanned the break now, the white jackass had gone to one side of them, for they were wedged against the left wall of the canyon.

Ned made up his mind what to do before the match went out.

"Some one has been at work here," he thought. "I'm going on to investigate. It is just possible that Lizette may have escaped. The King of the Canyon may have been able to help her. I must know, and I am going on."

"You can cross there," he said aloud; "lead your jackass over the bridge."

"Dere vas no pridge on de vay to Black Tail Canyon," said Van Pots, "so dis cannot pe de vay."

"I go this way. You can go back if you wish."

"No, no, don't leave me. Let's stig togedder—yes?"

"I'm going," said Ned, and he ran lightly across the bridge, turned the projecting rocks, and in an instant found himself in a larger sink, a great open space miles across, well over-

grown with trees which had sprung up among masses of broken rocks which lay scattered in every direction.

On the left was a small hut, in the window of which a bright light burned.

Ned came to a halt instantly.

"Come pack! Come pack!" Van Pots was calling. "I will not go over dat pridge."

"Let him go to thunder," muttered Ned. "I mean to find out what's going on in here."

He pushed forward to the hut and peered in through the window, drawing back with a startled exclamation.

Four figures bathed in blood lay stretched upon the floor.

There was every evidence of a fierce struggle.

A table had been overturned and lay among a mass of broken crockery.

Three chairs had been flung about and one was broken.

On the mantelpiece over the open fireplace stood a reflecting dark-lantern which threw a bright light upon the scene.

"There has been murder done here!" gasped Ned. "Yes, it's the same fellow. That's the one. He is the King of the Canyon, and, by gracious, he does look something like me!"

Allowing for the difference of dress the resemblance was really remarkable—another would have realized this better than Ned himself.

For the moment Ned hesitated about entering.

He felt then that he would like to have Van Pots to back him up.

He hurried back to the break and called to the peddler in a low voice.

There was no answer.

Listening, Ned could hear the click of the hoofs of the white jackass on the floor of the canyon.

Van Pots, afraid to risk the animal on the rude bridge, had gone back.

"Let him go," thought Ned. "Whatever all this means it is up to me, and I must go it alone."

He ran back to the hut and boldly opened the door.

The King of the Canyon stood behind it, his face as white as death.

"Lizette! The boys of the Bullion!" he gasped. "Help!"

Then, reeling forward, he fell fainting into Ned's arms.

Everybody was in trouble, it seemed, and everybody wanted help from Ned.

The King of the Canyon seemed to be either dead or dying.

Ned supported him out into the open air and laid him on the ground.

It did not make a bit of difference that this young man had tried to shoot him only a short while before. Ned never gave that a thought.

Running to a spring near by which he had observed bubbling up out of a barrel, he scooped up a handful of water and dashed it into the boy's face.

It revived him. His eyes opened and he lay there groaning, but did not speak.

Ned stepped back and looked into the hut.

The other three on the floor were all young men with hardened faces. All were dead. There was no sign of Lizette.

"Come!" he heard the wounded boy calling. "Come!"

Ned ran back to him.

He had managed to get upon his feet again, and was standing there swaying from side to side.

"Save her!" he muttered. "Help me to save her! I won't die! I mustn't. The Indians! They have carried off Lizette!"

Then his head dropped upon his breast once more, he reeled forward, and again fell heavily into Ned's arms.

CHAPTER VII.

NED CHANGES PLACES WITH THE KING OF THE CANYON.

"Do you feel better now? Do you think you can talk and tell me what it is you want me to do?"

The King of the Canyon had come to his senses once more.

His eyes were open, and he clutched Ned Wilbur's hand, but he seemed entirely unable to speak.

He had been shot in two places, as Ned discovered while he was unconscious—in the back and in the neck on the left side.

The latter seemed to be only a flesh wound, but perhaps it had paralyzed some of the muscles of the mouth, for now, although the boy made desperate efforts to do so, he could not speak.

So here was Ned "up against" a mystery, as he expressed it to himself.

He could not understand how Lizette could be alive, and carried off by Indians.

Yet the King of the Canyon had spoke too definitely to be misunderstood.

He was little more than a boy, after all, not much older than Ned himself, although his fantastic dress made him appear so.

His eyes were fixed pleadingly upon Ned now. He seemed to be making a most desperate effort to pull himself together, and at length he succeeded to a certain extent.

"Write! I will write!"

The words burst from his lips like a shot from a gun.

They were the last he uttered or tried to utter for some time.

Ned pulled out his memorandum book, giving him a pencil, and bringing the dark-lantern from the hut he held it so that he could see what he was about.

The wounded boy seemed to be strong enough in his hands and clear enough in his head.

Seizing the pencil, he wrote as follows:

"I saved Lizette from Lost River. She was carried off by Indians. Her horse is in the cave behind the hut. Get it. Move the boards behind the stone. Tie me on. The boys from the Bullion are to be attacked and robbed. I must save them. That first. There is just time. I promise not to die."

He wrote with more and more difficulty as he advanced down the page, and in the end the pencil fell from his hand.

Ned thought he was dying, but for all that he resolved to do just as he had been asked and to see the adventure through.

He now hurried around behind the hut, carrying the lantern with him.

Here was a great pile of rocks extending back against the wall of the canyon.

There were some old boards apparently thrown carelessly against the rocks with a few pieces of loose stone laid against them.

This was evidently the place, and Ned pulled away the boards.

Sure enough, it was the entrance to a small cave or rather a hole formed by the way in which the rocks had tumbled together.

Ned flashed the lantern in and saw that the place was fitted up as a barn with accommodations for several horses.

There was only one horse here now, a fine black gelding which Ned instantly recognized as the one Lizette had ridden.

The saddle and bridle hung near by on pegs. Ned put them on and led the horse out of the cave and around to where the King of the Canyon lay.

He had managed to get into a sitting position now, and was resting on a stone.

He stared at Ned fixedly for some minutes and made signs that he wanted to write again.

So Ned gave him the pencil and book, and he wrote as follows:

"Don't try to question me. I am too weak. We look very much alike. Lizette saw it and it is so. Go into the hut, up into the loft. There you will find a suit of my clothes and a hat and boots. Put them on. It may be necessary. Do it as quick as you can."

Ned had already made up his mind to do just as he was told and to see the adventure through no matter where it might lead him, so he hurried to the hut and ascending the ladder found the suit as described.

He hastily put it on, leaving his own clothes behind him, rather reluctantly, it must be owned, and went down the ladder again.

This time the King of the Canyon had managed to get on his feet, and was standing just outside the doorway with a stout rope in his hand.

He had the book and pencil, too, and had written across the page:

"Tie me to the saddle in front. I am stronger now, but I can't speak. I am coming out of this all right."

It was with considerable difficulty that Ned got him upon the horse, but at last he succeeded, and managed to tie him there.

The King took the rein and Ned vaulted up behind him.

"Orlando! Orlando!" the "King" gasped out, pointing to himself.

"I understand. Your name is Orlando," said Ned. "Bust ahead."

A moment later they were dashing along the trail.

The lantern had been fixed to the pommel of the saddle just as Lizette had carried hers.

Across the sink they rode a distance of perhaps two miles.

Orlando stood it well. He swayed some from side to side,

but on the whole he seemed to be gaining strength every minute.

Once he spoke in that same gasping way.

"Serves me right!" was what he said. Then he looked around at Ned and there were tears in his eyes.

He shook his head and dashed them away. A few moments later they came to the end of the sink and entered a dark canyon along which they rode rapidly for a mile or more, coming then into a wider canyon where there was a well-defined and ascending trail.

Then Orlando spoke again.

"Spur!" he gasped. "Faster, now!"

Ned dug his heels into the horse's flanks while steadyng himself and Orlando by holding on tight around the boy's waist.

The horse dashed up the rise in great style.

At the top they found themselves out of the canyon upon a broad wooded tableland extending to the foot of a mountain at no great distance beyond.

Orlando turned the horse directly into the woods to the left of the trail and came to a halt.

"Hark!" he gasped. "What do you hear?"

"Horses coming along the trail," Ned instantly replied.

"Take me off! Leave me! I am fainting. Ride on, warn them! They will not shoot you in that dress. You are the King of the Canyon now."

He seemed to have recovered his speech all at once.

But it was his last effort.

He was quite unconscious when Ned lifted him from the horse, and laid him down upon the grass.

"Poor fellow! I hate to leave him," thought Ned, "but I'm going to do just what he tells me. By gracious, this is turning out to be a night of adventures for fair!"

And as we have said before, Ned liked nothing better than adventures.

He would not have missed all this for anything.

It was a little livelier sort of business than repairing the time-lock of a safe.

Not knowing what he was about to strike, Ned dashed on through the woods, hearing the sound of the approaching horses plainer and plainer as he advanced.

Suddenly the sounds ceased.

"Look out, boys! We are running into a trap," a voice rang out. "The woods are full of them right ahead."

The words were no sooner spoken than the crack of several rifles was heard.

The shots were instantly answered by others.

"The King of the Canyon has betrayed us!" a voice yelled.

"The King of the Canyon has not betrayed you," spoke up another voice. "The King of the Canyon is dead!"

"Then you killed him, or know who did," thought Ned. "By gracious, I'm in on that fight. I promised to help do as he asked me, and I'll keep my word."

He unslung his rifle and dashed on along the trail.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTURED.

Ned was a splendid shot. He had hunted grizzly bears on the side of Old Shasta, and shot jackrabbits and gophers on the plains of Jolo county from the time he was as high as a full-sized jack-rabbit until he quit the country and went down to San Francisco to learn the watchmaker's trade.

So the crack of a rifle did not disturb Ned as much as it would another, but just the same he had no notion of risking his life.

Avoiding the trail he swung off to the right and soon came in sight of the combatants.

A large wagon drawn by six horses was drawn up in the road.

It was loaded down with bullion boxes, and as Ned afterward learned, had come down from the famous Bullion gold mine located far up in the mountains.

Four boys armed with rifles were defending it and a party of a dozen men, Indian half-breeds all of them, were closing in on them with a raking fire and filling the air with their wild shouts.

Just as Ned came in sight of all this the battle ended.

The wagon boys took to their heels, and made a break into the woods.

Ned spurred his horse after them, but unluckily the animal stumbled over a root, went down on his knees, and sent the bogus King of the Canyon flying over his head.

Ned struck the ground with terrible force.

His head hit against a stone, and for the moment he became unconscious.

When he recovered himself he was surrounded by the half-breeds, and there were several full-blooded Indians among them.

"It's the King of the Canyon," a big fellow with only one eye exclaimed. "They lied to us. He is not dead!"

"Kill him, Pete! Kill him!" cried another, whose long, straight hair proclaimed his Indian origin. "Kill him and break up the gang forever. There's not room for two gangs in these mountains, boy!"

"Kill nothing," replied Pete. "Who knows where the bank gold is? I reckon he only does now that the others are dead. We are out for the dust every time."

"Who knows the others are dead? Who knows any of them are dead?" spoke up another. "It was all a lie from beginning to end."

"He goes as a prisoner till I say the word," growled Pete, seizing Ned by the collar. "Up with you, Orlando! Your day is over. You have got to quit the business, boy. Tell me what became of the bank gold, and I'll give you a chance for your life. You must have been mad to venture here."

Ned stood staring at them, but never answered a word.

In the first place he did not know what to say; in the next he had come to the conclusion that the only chance for his life was by keeping silent and making these tough citizens believe that he possessed the secret which they wanted to learn.

"Speak up, Orlando!" cried Pete, giving him a prod with the butt of his rifle. "You see where we are. We've put the Bullion boys on the run and captured their load in spite of you. Say, were any of our fellows down at your hold-out a while ago?"

Ned drew himself up proudly.

Evidently these men never doubted that he was the real thing, and he resolved to keep up the illusion the best he could.

"They were," he said, wondering if his voice was going to betray him.

It did not.

"What happened?" Pete demanded fiercely. "Are they dead?"

"Three are dead. I live."

"You were not there?"

"Yes, but I escaped."

"Some one will have to account for it," roared Pete. "It's always the way. Nothing ever goes as I plan it. What became of the bank gold?"

"Ask your friends. Don't ask me."

"You know?"

"Perhaps I do and perhaps I don't."

"You'll tell!"

"Perhaps I will and perhaps I won't."

"Tell what you know or I'll put a bullet right into your brain," Pete fairly yelled, as he cocked his rifle, aimed it at Ned, and drew back.

"You will never find the bank gold if you do, Pete," said Ned, and folding his arms he stood calmly facing the half-breed.

Was it death?

Ned hardly thought so.

"I must make a big bluff!" he said to himself. "It is the only thing which will save my life."

He was right.

Pete did not fire.

"You'll tell or I'll make it hot for you, boy," he hissed. "You know I've got Injun blood enough in me to make me bad enough for anything. We have run against each other before, but this will be the last. How would you like to be tied up to a pinon tree with a slow fire built around you? How would you like that, now? Do you think then you would tell?"

"You say so," replied Ned. "I've got nothing more to say."

"Seems to me you have mighty little to say, anyhow, and you are usually tonguey enough, anyhow, too. Tie him up, boys. We have to finish this job and get back up the mountain. Time enough to attend to this business later on."

This ended the talk with Ned.

His hands were now bound behind him with a strip of rawhide.

He was carried back into the woods and lifted upon his own horse and firmly tied to the saddle, a full-blooded Indian being left to guard him while the outlaws went on with their work, which was nothing less than to carry off the boxes of bullion upon the wagon.

They managed it very skillfully, too.

The wagon horses were unhitched and a good portion of their harness taken off.

There seemed to be an unlimited quantity of rawhide rope around.

A piece was tied tight around each box and they were tied together two and two and slung across the backs of the horses.

The wagon horses were made to carry six each, and the others four, except the horse which Ned was tied to, and that was given two.

It was all done so rapidly that within ten minutes everything was ready for a start.

Each man now mounted, the Indian who had been guarding Ned jumped up behind him, his own horse being led by another.

"Fall in line!" cried Pete, putting himself in the lead.

Then turning sharply to the left he rode off into the woods, followed by all hands.

It was a bad business for Ned.

He now deeply regretted that he had not been more cautious.

Not a word was spoken nor was there any special haste made. Pete led his band through the woods at quite a leisurely pace.

At length they came to the end of the tableland and struck the foot of the mountain.

It was not particularly steep here; in fact, the ascent was decidedly gradual, especially in the deep gully into which Pete led the way.

This gully by many windings led them up on top of a narrow ridge.

This was followed for a mile or so, the halt being made at last in front of a steep, rocky bluff against which the ridge ended abruptly.

It was now well on toward morning, and the gray of dawn had begun to show itself in the east.

Pete drew from his pocket a small, ivory whistle, which he blew sharply.

"Hadn't you better blindfold the boy?" demanded one of the outlaws. "The King of the Canyon has never learned the way into One-eyed Pete's hold-out yet, and it's just as well that he never should."

"It don't make no difference, seeing as he will never leave it," growled Pete. "Still, if you fellows want it, why, let it be done."

The Indian behind Ned then tied a handkerchief tightly over his eyes.

There was a wait of a few minutes, and Pete suddenly exclaimed:

"Forward!"

Once more the procession was on the move.

Where were they going?

They had not turned, and yet when Ned last looked ahead of him there was the wall of solid rock.

CHAPTER IX.

NED FINDS LIZETTE AND MAKES A BOLD DASH FOR FREEDOM.

For some distance the outlaw band continued to move on in silence, broken only by the click of the horses' hoofs upon the rock.

"Halt!" came the order again after a little.

"Remove the blindfold from Orlando's eyes," was the next. The Indian behind Ned tore the handkerchief away.

The sun had just risen. Looking about him Ned perceived that they had come into an entirely different sort of country.

The gloomy canyons had been left behind them.

They were entering upon a broad valley surrounded by wooded mountains on all sides.

A stream ran winding through a long stretch of meadow land where a herd of cattle and many mustangs were feeding.

A little ahead stood a group of small log huts with a few Indian lodges near by.

Women and children had come out of the huts and stood waiting for the outlaw band. A pack of dogs were rushing towards the riders, barking loudly in welcome.

"There you are, Orlando!" cried Pete, looking around. "You may call yourself the King of the Canyon, you may think you know a lot about the mountains, but here's a spot I'll venture to say you never saw before."

Ned made no reply, and they rode on up to the huts.

They had not yet reached them when a fierce-looking tough came rushing out of one of the huts.

He stopped, threw up his hands, and drew back in utter astonishment at the sight of Ned.

"Alive!" he cried. "How is this, Pete? There he is, and I thought I killed him, or at least I thought I did."

"Yes," sneered Pete, "and that's the way you did the job. He looks dead, don't he? I tell you, Barney, that when I send a man to do a job I like to see it done, and that's what. You will have to give an account of yourself for this."

"I tell you I did do him up. We laid out the whole four of them and brought Ed Irving's daughter in here a prisoner, finding her in the hut."

"That's what Piute Joe reported," sneered Pete, "but you must have dreamed it as far as Orlando is concerned."

"It isn't so! I did shoot you, didn't I, Orlando?" shouted the man.

"I've nothing to say," quietly replied Ned.

"Nothing to say! Nothing to say! You shall have something to say!" roared Barney. "I won't be turned down and made a liar out of like this. I—"

"Hold your jaw!" broke in Pete. "Bring out the girl."

Pete's will seemed to be law.

Barney immediately quit talking, and going into one of the huts soon returned, bringing Lizette.

The girl looked pale and worn, but she did not appear to be injured in any way, nor were her hands tied.

Her eyes were fixed upon Ned wonderingly, but there was a joyful look about them, too.

"Does she guess who I am?" thought Ned. "I wonder if she would look at me in that way if I was in my own clothes?"

All hands had now dismounted but Ned, who, being tied to the saddle, of course could not do so.

The boys of the camp, many of whom were full-blooded Indians, led the horses away.

The Indian who had ridden behind Ned dismounted also, and stood by the horse's head.

"Unload here, you fellows!" cried Pete. "Stow the bullion boxes away in the stock room. I'll be with you in a minute."

The outlaws flew around to obey.

Pete then turned to Lizette and Barney. The latter had remained perfectly mute since he had been ordered to hold his tongue.

Ned could not but admire the discipline in which Pete held his band.

"Now then, Barney," exclaimed Pete sternly, "we will attend to your case. How about this affair, Miss Lizette?"

"What affair?" returned Lizette boldly. Ned noticed that the girl displayed no sign of fear.

"The fight in the hut—your capture. Barney claims that he killed the King of the Canyon and yet he is without a scratch on him. How do you account for that?"

"I can't account for it. I know nothing about it. Your men attacked the hut, Pete. I certainly saw Orlando fall with his friends. I ran outside then and was captured. That is all I know."

"I was playing possum," Ned spoke up, anxious to end this useless talk.

"Ha! I see. Well, we will soon put you where you can't play possum, Orlando, and don't you forget it. Miss Lizette, what were you doing in the hut?"

"Do you ask me?" she cried. "I came up into the canyon hoping to recover the gold dust your men stole from my father's bank."

"Ha! You thought it was Orlando's men who had taken it. You think you know better now."

"You have said it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Pete. "Why didn't you come to me?"

"You know. Would I be likely to trust you?"

"You will have to before you get through with this trip. I heard that you and your horse fell into Lost River through a break in the trail."

"That's true."

"How did you escape?"

"The river was shallow. My horse waded along toward the hut, and Orlando came down into the cave and helped us out."

"A narrow escape. If the river had been as high as it usually is you would have been swept away to a dead certainty. But enough of this talk. Orlando, it is up to you. It was your gang who robbed the bank, not mine. Where is that gold?"

"I cannot tell you," replied Ned, wondering what was coming next.

"Lizette, do you know?" demanded Pete, looking fiercely at the girl.

"I do not, and I don't think Orlando does," replied Lizette. "He did not order the robbery. It was done without his knowledge, if his men did it at all."

"I understand. The accepted lover of pretty Lizette Irving would hardly rob her father's bank, or at least if he did he

would not tell her. But I don't believe one word of it. Orlando, once more I ask, where is that gold?"

"I cannot tell you," replied Ned as firmly as ever. "It is no use to ask me, for I do not know."

"You're a liar!" roared Pete. "Now, listen to my ultimatum. You'll tell, or right now I shall tie you to a stake, build a fire around you, and burn you alive. Do you understand?"

"Oh, Pete!" cried Lizette, "have mercy. Remember the days when you lived with us at Gander's Gully. Were you not always treated well in my father's house?"

"Hold your tongue, girl!" retorted the outlaw. "You are in my power now. It is for me and not for you to say what may or must not be."

Loud and angry voices coming from the hut where the outlaws were stowing away the bullion boxes interrupted the conversation here.

The next instant a shot was fired and there was a general uproar.

"Burn them sellers! Can't they keep from quarreling two minutes?" cried Pete, drawing his revolver and rushing toward the hut.

There was no one left but the silent Indian who stood guard at the horse's head.

Ned shot a look at Lizette.

It was understood.

"Drop that rein or you die!" hissed Ned, suddenly whipping out a revolver and covering the Indian.

At the same time he extended a hand to Lizette, who vaulted into the saddle behind him as easily as if she had been a man. Then it was off and away, with the outlaws shouting after them and discharging their rifles at the fleeing pair.

CHAPTER X.

NED KILLS A GRIZZLY.

"Do you see them now?"

"No. I can see nothing of them. They must have passed us."

"I think they have, Lizette. Our taking to the water was the best thing we could have done. It threw the dogs off the trail, and that is what we wanted, but what to do next I'm sure I don't know."

Ned and Lizette had halted in the midst of a thick clump of fir trees some five miles down that beautiful valley, in which, being practically unexplored and unknown to the white settlers of the region, the outlaw band, controlled by One-eyed Pete, made their home.

Their escape had been at once so sudden and unexpected that they got a good start before Pete could pull his band together, get the horses saddled and begin the pursuit.

The chase had been a hot one as long as the fugitives remained in sight, but coming fortunately upon a place where the stream ran through a stretch of forest, Ned took to the water and allowed the outlaws to pass them; so now, for the time being, they were safe.

It was time they stopped for the horse was pretty well winded and Ned himself, still tied to the saddle although his arms were free, was anxious to stretch his limbs on the ground.

Lizette fixed that in a minute.

Slipping from the saddle she produced a knife and cut Ned free.

"There, that is better!" he exclaimed. "It's the first time I ever had a ride like that and I hope it may be the last. Now, Lizette, look at me. Do you know who I am?"

"Certainly I do," was the reply. "You are not the King of the Canyon."

"I was wondering; who am I, then?"

"The locksmith who came to Gander's Gully last night to repair our safe. Oh, I know you perfectly well."

"Do you think I look like your friend Orlando?"

"Enough like him to be his twin brother. I saw the resemblance the moment you came into the bank. I don't wonder One-eyed Pete was deceived. Ned, how did you come by those clothes? Where is Orlando? Is he dead?"

"I do not know whether he is or no, but I am afraid it is so."

"Afraid! He tried to kill you. He shot your horse. Why should you care?"

"I do care. I have taken a fancy to him, strange as it may seem. Listen to my story and you will know how all this came about."

Lizette was only too anxious to hear the story, and Ned lost no time in the telling of it.

"He lives! I know it!" she exclaimed when he had finished, and then she burst into tears.

"You love Orlando," said Ned, quietly; "I see that plainly enough."

"Why not? We were children together and grew up together," Lizette replied. "My father worked a mining claim in these mountains years ago. That is the time we became acquainted. Later, Orlando went wild and got in with a hard gang; they made him their leader and—well, it is all very painful; I don't want to talk about it."

"You don't have to. Then Orlando does not belong to One-eyed Pete's gang?"

"No, no! Pete's gang is made up of half-breeds, striking miners and ex-convicts. They are a terrible set of fellows, but I will not deny that Orlando's gang is just as bad. It was they who robbed the bank. I have no doubt, but he knew nothing of it. Of late they have grown tired of being led by a boy and there has been trouble among them. That is the way it happened. I thought if I could see Orlando I might get the gold dust back, but everything went wrong from the start, as you know."

"Hush!" whispered Ned. "There is some one coming through the bushes I am sure."

There had been a rustling among the bushes a little further back of them.

Both heard it, but now that they came to listen all was still.

"It's some animal" said Lizette. "Ned, how fortunate it was that Orlando gave you that revolver. One-eyed Pete is a perfect fiend. He would have done just as he threatened. You needn't doubt that for a moment."

"It was fortunate enough," replied Ned. "I was going to ask you what is Orlando's other name?"

"He was called Orlando Martinez," said Lizette, "but I don't think anybody now living knows what his name really is. He was brought up among these mines when a very little boy, by a Mexican named Martinez, who was killed in a fight. I was going to say—mercy on us! What was that?"

It was a terrible noise and no mistake.

Ned felt that he ought to know what it was, seeing that he had been frightened by it once before.

There was no mistaking the bray of Van Pots' jackass nor the wild cry which followed it.

"Hellup! Hellup! De pear! De grizzly pear! Save mine life from de grizzly pear!"

And mingling with the cry came a series of growling, snapping sounds which told only too plainly that the peddler really needed help.

Ned rushed to the rescue.

The cry came from their left, further in among the trees.

"Oh, be careful! Do be careful!" cried Lizette, hurrying after him. "Ned, what shall I ever do if you are killed?"

"Trust me!" cried Ned, looking back. "I've killed grizzlies before now."

He dashed on through the woods, coming in a moment upon the scene of action.

The forest ended right here and the rise of the mountains began.

At the mouth of a narrow canyon was Van Pots, seated on the jackass.

His hat had fallen off and his short, stubby hair seemed to be all on end with terror, as well it might be, for directly in front of him, some ten feet away, was a large grizzly bear.

Frightened himself, by the bray of the jackass, no doubt, the animal had risen on its hind legs and stood snapping and snarling at the strange figure before him, the like of which bruin had never seen before.

Probably he took Gold Dust and the hunchback to be all one piece, some new description of animal altogether beyond his ken.

At all events, he seemed to be afraid to make the attack—just as much afraid as Van Pots was to turn his jackass around and beat a retreat.

At the sight of Ned, Van Pots went at it again.

"Hellup! Hellup! Hellup!" he yelled. "Save me from de pear!"

Ned held up his hand for silence.

He had his revolver all ready: question was, could he get his chance to put the bullet into the bear?

But Ned knew his business. Besides this it is doubtful if Idaho could have produced a better shot with a revolver than this same boy.

Hastily taking what he believed to be the best position for his purpose, Ned gave a wild cry, almost a roar.

This did the business.

The grizzly dropped on all fours and instantly wheeled about.

The crack of Ned's revolver followed the movement and the bear dropped dead with a bullet between the eyes.

"Good!" cried Lizette. "Ned, that was a splendid shot! If only it don't bring the gang down upon us. Is the bear dead?"

"I think he is," replied Ned, modestly. "We'll hope for the best about the gang. Van Pots, what on earth brings you here?"

"Ach, mein herr, Van Pots vas eferyvere vere dere's a shance to do peezness—yes. Your servant, mees? I sees you in Gander's Gully many times. Ha! vonce I tries to sell you a pair of suspenders, but you say you haf no use for dem. Perhaps now you may t'ink different und—"

"Stop it!" Ned broke in. "You have said enough. Give an account of yourself. How did you get in here?"

"Ach, dot's de vay! De King of de Canyon try to fool me last nide, all righd; but I knowed you from de furst. Didn't I know you? Mebbe you would like to puy a pair of suspenders for your ownself or some of your men."

"If you don't let up on the suspenders I'll take a pair from your pack and hang you by them to the nearest tree!" cried Ned, and then he whispered to Lizette: "Let him think I am the King of the Canyon; it can do no harin."

"Vera goot!" said the peddler, not at all ruffled by Ned's threat. "Since your majesty does not like suspender talk I vill suspend it und talk apout somedings else. You ask me how I come here? Vell, I rides on Gold Dust. I tell de trute, your majesty. I vill not deceive you—no!"

"You had better not try," said Ned, fiercely, listening all the time for such sounds behind him as might indicate that One-eyed Pete's gang had been alarmed by the shot and were coming that way.

"Van Pots," he added, "I am satisfied that the canyon behind you is a way out of this place, which I don't happen to know. You will tell me more about it—all about it—every-thing, in fact."

"I'll go and get the horse while you are talking to him," whispered Lizette.

"Do," replied Ned, "but be very careful."

Lizette promised and departed, while Ned again turned to the hunchback peddler who still sat astride the white jackass, staring down at the dead bear.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEW KING OF THE CANYON STARTS OUT FOR BUSINESS.

"Van Pots, do you know what my opinion of you is?" said Ned. "I think you are simply a big fraud."

"Vera vell," replied Van Pots, "I should not vonder ve are all frauds more or less. You vas a fraud your ownself ven you try to make me belieff you vas not de King of de Canyon last night. However, I vill forgive you, for you safe my life from de pear."

"What brings you here?" demanded Ned. "Were you coming into this valley to sell suspenders to One-eyed Pete's gang?"

"Dat vas mine intention ven I finish up mit de poys of de Bullion Mine," replied the peddler. "I tell you all apout it like I said I vould. I go dere first efery time. Vell, last night ven you run avay und leaf me, I goes pack und finds de vay to Plack Tail Canyon. Vera goot. I goes along Plack Tail Canyon mit Gold Dust till I comes to a blace where I hear de shots a-going und deu who do I run into but de poys from the Bullion Mine. Mein stars, how dey startles me! Vell, no matter apout dat. I vas always being startled mit something—yes. Vell, dey vas running avay from Von-eyed Pete's gang, dey tells me. Dose sellers had robbed de gold vagon und carried off all de gold and de King of de Canyon, which vas you, who had promised to protect dem from Von-eyed Pete's gang. Vell, dey vas goot customers of mine, dose poys. Dey vas in droubles, for dey had lost deir load. Dey ask me vould I dake dem into de mountains und show dem de vay into Von-eyed Pete's walley, und vot could I say put yes? So ve goes pack und gets more poys from de Bullion, mit guns und knives, und here ve are, ready for peezness. All dey vant ish a leader, und I guess a feller apout your size is de poy for the job."

"You are right, there, and I am ready," replied Ned; "but where are they? How is it that you are alone?"

"Oh, Cey vas eating breakfast back dere in de canyon. I comes on ahead to see if the vay is all clear."

"Good!" exclaimed Ned. "Well, I will go to them. If they

want me to show them the way to One-eyed Pete's settlement I can do it as well as you, Van Pots, although I don't doubt you have been in there many times."

"I will not deny it, your majesty. My peezness is to sell suspenders, und it makes no difference to me who buys."

"Wait," said Ned, "I will go back for Miss Irving. She went to bring up our horse. I can't imagine why she does not return."

It was but a short distance to where they had left the horse, not over a hundred yards or so. Ned covered the ground in a moment, hardly expecting to find what he did find, yet with his mind oppressed with fear.

"Where can she be?" he muttered, looking around among the trees in every direction, for no trace of Lizette could be seen.

His worst fears were realized. He had become separated from Lizette, yet there was no explanation for it, for there was no sign of the outlaws.

Again and again Ned shouted Lizette's name, but received no answer.

The girl had simply vanished and the horse had gone with her. It was a mystery not easily explained, for if the outlaws had come into the woods they could not have failed to hear Ned talking with Van Pots.

Aroused by Ned's cries, Van Pots now came forward on Gold Dust and rode up and down among the trees assisting Ned in his search, but all in vain.

"It's Von-eyed Pete. He ged here some vay; dat's vat," declared Van Pots. "Vell, vat you do? Search forefer or go mit me to de poys from de Bullion? I don't know vere your own gang is already yet, but I t'ink de Bullion poys vas schoost as goot."

"Let's get back to them as quickly as possible, Van Pots," said Ned. "If that poor girl has really been captured by the outlaws and taken to their village, there is not one instant to be lost."

"Jump up behind me on Gold Dust," said the peddler. "Seeing dat you half lost your horse you vill not despise my jackass. I vill do any old t'ing for de King of de Canyon now, seeing dat he half saved my life."

As they moved slowly back along the canyon Ned thought fast.

Aside from the loss of Lizette this was the sort of adventure that just suited him.

It tickled him greatly to be mistaken for the dashing young outlaw.

He had hunted everything huntale in California, as we have mentioned before, but here was to be a new experience hunting a tough mountain gang.

Ned made up his mind that if the boys of the Bullion Mine accepted the situation and mistook him for the King of the Canyon that he would not attempt to undeceive them.

"I'll put it through and get back the gold for them and let them know who I am afterward," he thought.

They had not ridden far along the canyon before they met a party of some twenty young men coming toward them, all well mounted, with three led horses, to be used in case of accident, trotting on behind.

At the sight of Ned they set up a shout and the time-lock boy soon found himself in the midst of a noisy crowd.

A young man named Butt McCluckey—Ned learned some of their names later—took the lead in the talk.

"Well, you're a pretty fellow!" he exclaimed. "Here we paid you fifty dollars to bring up your gang into Black Tail Canyon and see us safe down the mountain with our load, and we have lost every box of it. What have you got to say for yourself? How is it that you are here alone and without your horse? Have you joined One-eyed Pete's gang?"

Fortunately Ned was one of the cool kind or he might have become considerably rattled by this rude speech.

"Gentlemen," he replied, "when I give my word I always try to keep it, but this time circumstances were too much for me. There has been trouble in my camp. We were attacked last night by One-eyed Pete's people and several of my men were killed outright and I became separated from the rest. What I did then was the best I could have done for you or any one else. I rode on and tried to get to you in time to warn you and explain exactly how the case stood. You saw what happened, according to Van Pots. My horse stumbled and I was thrown and captured by Pete's gang. They took me into the hidden valley and there I found a young lady of my acquaintance a captive, too. Perhaps some of you know her—Lizette Irving of Gander's Gully. I succeeded in escaping with her and got as far as the mouth of the canyon here when I met Van Pots. He will tell you the rest. I am

at your service, gentlemen. If you don't care to go with me back into the valley I shall go alone."

"You talk well," said Butt McCluckey. "You always did. What about Lizette? We all know her well."

"Ha! Vat apout her? Dot's schust de point!" cried Van Pots. "Dot King of de Canyon he safe mine life by shooting de grizzly bear. Mees Leezeette she go back for de horse und avay she deesappears, horse und all. Vat's de matter mit her? Did Von-eyed Pete's poys get her vonce again? Dot's schust vot ve don't know."

"He has told you what has happened, gentlemen," said Ned. "I can lead you straight to where your gold is stored if you will lend me a rifle and a horse. I will do my best to help you get it, and I expect you to do your best to help me rescue Lizette. I can say no more."

"You have said enough," replied Butt McCluckey. "Martinez, we are with you. If that gold is lost we, who undertook to run it down the mountain, lose our jobs, though it's a blame shame that it should be so, for the Bullion Mine is rich enough to provide a regular guard for their wagons, which they don't. You can take whichever one of those led horses you please, and there is a spare rifle strapped to the saddle. The sooner we start the better, I say."

"You don't have to wait for me," replied Ned, who had already dismounted from Gold Dust.

He hurried back, threw himself into the saddle, and, unstrapping the rifle, rode to the head of the line.

"That's the talk!" cried a young fellow named Dan Nevins. "Hooray for the King of the Canyon! It begins to look like business now!"

"Forward!" cried Ned. "Stick close to me, boys, and there'll be something doing in One-eyed Pete's valley inside the next half hour, or I miss my guess!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE BULLION BOYS GET BACK THEIR GOLD.

"We want to take to the water now, boys. The longer we can keep from being seen the better it will be for us. This fringe of trees along the creek continues down to within a hundred yards or so of Pete's camp."

"We're following your lead," said a miner named Packard. "I don't know how Van Pots' jackass will take to the water, though. If he's seen, our fat is all in the fire, of course."

Van Pots was ambling along behind the little cavalcade, cutting the same absurd figure he always did.

"Gold Dust does not like de water," he called out. "He is not a temperance jackass—no! He can drink his tree pottles of peer, all righd, and he likes dot, first rate; but ven it comes to water he isn't in it—no."

"I've got an idea, if Van Pots don't object," said Ned. "Of course these people all know him as a peddler. Let him ride forward and attract their attention. That will give us a chance to sweep down upon them and carry them by storm."

"A good scheme," said Butt McCluckey. "I say, let her go!"

"Vell, vell! How apout me?" objected Van Pots. "Suppos'n I get shot, vat den?"

"It's my opinion you're half shot already!" laughed McCluckey. "Ride on, Dutchy, or we will finish the job."

"Now, dat vos wrong," argued Van Pots. "Dat vos not de vay to do peezezz. It ees not de fellers in Pete's camp dot I fear, but your ownselfes. You vill shoot me for sure."

"Scoot, Dutchy!" cried Ned. "Get a move on your old jackass or you will be very likely to pick up a shot."

Rather unwillingly Van Pots obeyed, and urged Gold Dust forward toward the outlaw's camp, which could now be seen in the distance through the trees.

"Do any of you fellows happen to have a glass about you?" asked Ned. "If I could get a close look into the camp before we make the final move it would not be a bad thing."

Packard had a fieldglass with him and he handed it out.

Ned carefully adjusted it to his eyes and turned it upon the outlaws' camp.

"I can't see anybody there but the women and children," he said after a few moments. "Can they still be chasing me up the valley? It looks that way."

"Now is our time to get the gold, all right, then," said Butt McCluckey.

"Sure it is!" answered Ned. "Forward, boys! We will snake it out of the camp in no time!"

By this time Van Pots was half-way down to the group of Indian lodges and log huts.

It worked just as Ned thought it would.

The fact was, the hunchback peddler knew all about this part of the mountains. He had been in the camp many times.

When the women and children saw him coming they flocked out to meet him.

Except one or two old, gray-haired bucks there wasn't a man among them.

The crowd and the peddler had not yet come together when suddenly a band of mounted men, well armed, came sweeping down upon the camp.

Everybody was panic-stricken in an instant.

"The King of the Canyon! The King of the Canyon!" the women screamed, and followed by the children, the squaws and papooses all fled back up the creek, deserting the camp.

"That's the talk! We win hands down!" exclaimed McCluckey. "I would liked to have had a crack at 'em, though."

"So would I," replied Ned, "and we may get it yet. Meantime be thankful you have got the gold."

"That's what!" echoed Packard. "Hello! Here's one who hasn't run away!"

It was an old, gray-haired buck, who now appeared at the door of the hut where the gold had been stored.

"What about it, old man?" cried Ned, hurrying up to him, for all had dismounted now.

"Silver Wing never desert his post," replied the Indian, loftily. "Boss tell Silver Wing, 'You stay guard.' Silver Wing stay guard so. Paleface boys too many for him. Silver Wing no help dat, but no run away. Ugh! ugh!"

It was impossible to help admiring the faithful old fellow, but of course no attention was paid to him.

The boxes of gold were run out of the hut in short order.

Plenty of rawhide strips were found with them and the boys of the Bullion Mine lost no time in loading them upon the horses in the same way One-eyed Pete's men had done.

The work was pushed forward so rapidly that in twenty minutes' time the Bullion boys were again on the move, leaving the outlaws' camp in charge of Silver Wing, who watched all these doings gravely and never uttered a word.

Loaded as they were, it was impossible to do any rushing now.

Indeed, Ned did not feel like it. He had searched every hut for Lizette without much hope of finding her.

It was his belief now that some scout from One-eyed Pete's gang had captured the girl and carried her up the valley.

"Dis is a pad job," groaned Van Pots, as he came ambling up alongside of Ned on the white jackass. "A very pad job indeed!"

"What's the matter with you?" replied Ned. "I call it a very good job."

"Vat! Vat! A goot job ven I sells no suspenders, and now dat I haf been seen mit you I can't nefer come in here again!"

Before Ned even had time to laugh at Van Pots' excited speech his attention was attracted by a band of mounted men far up the valley, galloping toward them with all speed.

"There they come!" he shouted. "Look out, boys! The gang is upon us right now!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EARTHQUAKE IN THE CANYON.

"Draw up in line! Stand ready! Everything depends upon the start we make!"

It was altogether a new experience for Ned to lead a band of twenty into a fight.

But in his assumed role of the King of the Canyon, Ned felt that he had a reputation to sustain and he was just the boy to do it, too.

His resemblance to Orlando Martinez was so striking that not one of the boys from the Bullion Mine suspected for a moment that he was not the real thing.

They assumed that he knew his business and consequently put themselves entirely at his command.

Ned thought fast.

"It's the fellows who fire first who are going to win," he said to himself.

The outlaws were pushing forward in single file and presented a straggling line.

"Don't wait for them to fire, boys!" Ned said. "The moment they come in range, let her go. They will try to line up, then; as they do it, lose no time in giving them another. If we can once get them on the run the game is in our hands."

"We are with you, Captain Martinez," said McCluckey. "You know a blame sight more about this sort of thing than we do. We will do just as you say."

Ned attempted no further speech, but silently waited the outlaws' approach.

Once he raised the opera glass to his eyes and took in the band, anxious to find out if Lizette was among them, but he could see nothing of her.

"What can have become of the poor girl?" he thought. "It's the biggest kind of mystery. It almost begins to look as though she had gone away of her own accord."

A few moments more of waiting and the critical time came. Ned saw that the gang were within range.

"Fire!"

Crack! Crack! Crash!

The words were scarcely given when every rifle spoke. One-eyed Pete kept his horse, but two of the outlaws behind him went down.

"Good enough! Hit 'em again!" cried Ned. Once more the rifles spoke, making two rounds before the gang could get in a shot.

Three more fell, wounded.

"Line up! Line up!" Pete was yelling. "Let 'em have it, boys!"

The return fire came all right now.

Two of the Bullion boys fell.

One, a poor fellow named Neil Duncan, was shot dead; Andy Sexton, the other, was badly wounded.

"Revenge!" shouted McCluckey.

"Blaze away!" echoed Ned.

For the five minutes succeeding the shots flew thick and fast.

Several fell wounded on both sides.

At last a well-directed shot from Ned's rifle took One-eyed Pete's horse from under him.

The outlaw chief fell heavily, striking the back of his head. He never moved and both sides thought him dead.

"Forward!" shouted Ned. "Now is our time!"

The fall of their leader seemed to bring panic to the gang.

Perhaps it was the bold charge of the Bullion boys that did it.

Be this as it may, they turned and fled in a disorderly line up the valley closely pursued by the King of the Canyon and his band.

But Ned did not pursue them far—only just long enough to put them well on the run.

With the loaded horses it would have been next to impossible to do any more, and besides this they were now opposite to the point where it was necessary to turn off in order to make the entrance to the canyon which was to take them out of the hidden valley.

The battle had been fought and won and the gold recovered.

With this both Ned and McCluckey thought that it would be the best to remain content.

Before starting in pursuit of the outlaws Ned had ordered four of the Bullion boys to remain behind to look after the wounded.

The gang once started showed no signs of stopping and soon were out of sight.

Ned, McCluckey and one or two others who had gone on ahead now returned to the band and the losses were summed up.

On the side of the Bullion boys there was one dead and five wounded, three so seriously that they had to be tied on to their horses, but there was nothing for it but to leave the body of poor Ned Duncan where it lay.

Six of the outlaws were wounded and two were dead.

One-eyed Pete had been merely stunned and he now stood a prisoner with his hands tied behind him when Ned came up.

"This is one on me, Orlando!" he said, bitterly. "You have got the best of me this time, boy, but wait, my time will yet come. Take me before the sheriff if you dare! I know enough about you and your doings to swear your neck into a halter, and I'll do it, too!"

"Keep your threats to yourself, Pete," retorted Ned. "I know my business and I'm able to attend to it without any help from anybody. When I want any suggestions from you I'll ask for them—understand?"

Ned found himself right on top now.

The Bullion boys were ready to do anything for him.

The only difficulty about playing his part to the end, that he saw ahead of him, was his lack of knowledge about these canyons of which he was supposed to be the king.

"I must manage it somehow," thought Ned. "Van Pots knows the way and he must be made to tell it without the others suspecting."

This he said to himself after the start as he rode along beside the horse to which One-eyed Pete had been tied.

"Where is Lizette?" asked the outlaw chief, suddenly. "What have you done with the girl?"

"That's what I intended to ask you," replied Ned, and without hesitation he related the story of Lizette's disappearance just as it occurred.

"I know nothing of her," declared Pete. "I haven't seen her since you rode out of the camp."

"All the same, you are going to be held responsible for her," replied Ned, "for it was your men who captured her and brought her in here."

By this time they had entered the canyon and were hurrying forward with the best speed the loaded horses could make. Ned rode back to Van Pots, who kept well in the rear.

"Look here, Van Pots," he said, in a low voice, "I have got a confession to make to you."

"Vat's dot?" demanded the peddler. "Vas I a priest already yet? I didn't know it if I vas."

"It's about this canyon; although I know these mountains pretty well, I'll own up to you that I don't know this particular canyon. What we want is to get into Black Tail Canyon just as quickly as ever we can. Do we follow this trail straight into it, or is there a turn-off? That's what I want to know from you."

"It is a straight road to de end of dis canyon," replied the peddler. "Den ve haf to climb over de mountains and go down into Black Tail Canyon on de oder side; dot's de vay."

"Put your old jackass on the run and get ahead of us, Van Pots," said Ned. "Some one ought to play the scout. If you see any sign of danger ahead you can fall back."

Van Pots objected, but Ned persisted, for he wanted him to halt at the beginning of the mountain trail as he felt very certain he would.

After some exertion Van Pots got Gold Dust on the run and was soon out of sight along the windings of the canyon.

For some twenty minutes more the little band continued to push on.

The atmosphere had now grown very hazy and there was a greenish look to the sky.

"There's going to be a storm," remarked Pete, "and it will be a cracker. I know these mountains better than you do, Orlando; if there isn't the deuce to pay inside of a few minutes I miss my guess."

"Is there any place where we can get under cover?" Ned asked.

"No, there isn't. We shall have to face it, but we are pretty well sheltered down here in the canyon as it is, and it grows narrower further on."

He had hardly spoken when the sky grew suddenly dark and a moment later a distinct earthquake shock was felt.

"Earthquake!" cried McCluckey and several others in a breath.

At the same instant a loud crash came immediately followed by another, and a cry from Van Pots:

"Hellup! Hellup! Hellup! De top haf tumbled off de mountain and knocked out de pottom! Hellup! Hellup!"

CHAPTER XIV.

IN GREAT PERIL.

"Push on as fast as you can!" cried Ned. "I must see what all this means. I'll ride ahead!"

He had no more than spoken when another and more severe shock came and a crash louder than the others fell upon their ears.

"We are done for!" groaned Pete. "This is the end of the world!"

Torrents of rain now began falling and inside of a very few moments the bottom of the canyon was running like a river, but before this happened, Ned, who pushed rapidly on, had come up with Van Pots.

The hunchbacked peddler was still astride his mule, staring fixedly ahead.

Evidently Gold Dust had one of his stubborn fits on him, for he stood motionless, with his forefeet planted firmly on the floor of the canyon, and at the sound of Ned's approach he flung up his heels and began to bray, making the whole canyon ring with the fearful sound.

Van Pots clung to the saddle for dear life, and never said a word.

If he had, nobody could have heard him, for Gold Dust had it all his own way then.

But it was not necessary for any one to speak. Ned could see what had happened at a single glance.

A wide break had opened in the floor of the canyon, while beyond it a large mass of rock had fallen from the heights

above, so completely choking up the way that even if the band could have passed the break they could get no further.

"It was as complete a cut-off as could be possibly imagined, and, of course, a very serious matter to all parties concerned.

"Get off the saddle, Van Pots, and make that infernal jack-ass stop his noise!" Ned roared out.

Perhaps Gold Dust understood the remark, for he quieted down then.

Van Pots dropped from the saddle.

"Vell, vell!" he cried, "dis ees a great piece of penezness, hih? We don't go no furder along dis trail—yes?"

"We are at the end of our rope, fast enough," replied Ned, "but we ought to be thankful we are alive. If you had been ten paces in advance, Van Pots, you would be dead under that pile of rocks now."

"Or in de river," added the peddler.

"River—what river?"

"De river underground. Don'd you hear him running along—yes?"

Ned could hear the rush of the water plainly enough now, but before his attention had been called to it he was not able to distinguish it from the sounds of the rain.

By this time there was a river above as well as below, for the water was up to the horses' fetlocks and over Van Pots' shoes, so he mounted Gold Dust again and had hardly taken his seat in the saddle when the rest of the party came riding up.

Ned explained the situation, though indeed all could see it for themselves.

"This is a bad business," said McCluckey. "What on earth are we going to do now?"

"There is nothing to do but to go back," said Ned.

"And that means more fighting and more of us dead, even if we win," Dan Nevins remarked.

"We can't stay here, of course," said Ned. "Pete, you know of no way of getting out of this except to go back to the valley; I suppose?"

"No, I don't; and if I did I shouldn't tell you," replied Pete. "I guess you will have to go back and interview my friends, boy. It looks very much that way."

"We will go back," said Ned. "We must. The way things look we shall soon be all afloat."

Ned now put himself at the head of the line and the whole party rode back along the canyon, making the best speed they could.

It had now become all the horses could do to keep their feet on the wet, slippery rock, with the water at least a foot deep.

Ned pushed on, though, and he was just beginning to look forward to getting out of the canyon when all at once, to his dismay, he saw that there had been another great mass of rock shaken down by the earthquake.

It appeared to have fallen from both walls and choked up the canyon completely.

The rocks were piled up higher than their heads, and in such a fashion that no one could possibly climb over them, to say nothing of the horses.

"Hemmed in!" cried Ned. "There's no passing here."

"What on earth are we to do?" demanded McCluckey. "Stay here till we starve to death?"

"Don't ask me," said Ned. "I'll never tell you."

"You are the boss, Martinez. They call you the King of the Canyon, I suppose you have earned your title. You ought to know."

"There are a lot of things I ought to know which I don't, and this is one of them," replied Ned, gloomily. "How about it, Pete? You know more of this part of the canyon than I do. Can you suggest any way?"

"It's up to me, I guess, to tell what I know," said Pete, "and I tell you in advance it won't please you very much. There is a way out of this fix, but the question is, where will it lead us? It's just as like as not it will be to our death."

"Speak it out, Pete," said Ned. "Let's have it for whatever it's worth."

"Don't you know, Orlando?"

"No, I don't."

"You ought to. No one knows any more about Lost River than you do. At least, unless you lied when you told me that you rode five miles along it once."

"I see what you mean," said Ned. "It's one thing to ride down Lost River when it's low, and another to tackle it after a storm like this."

"Well," said Pete, "that's all the way there is out of this, and it's my opinion that if we stay here much longer we shall

be drowned, anyhow, for many is the time I've seen this here canyon so full of water that it stood higher than the head of a mounted man."

CHAPTER XV.

DOWN LOST RIVER.

"Shall we tackle it, McCluckey?"

"That's for you to say, young feller."

"It begins to look as if it was either that or be drowned."

"That's what. I'm not particular about either, but when it comes to drowning, I suppose we might as well drown one way as another, though I'd rather do the job in the light than in the dark."

The situation had now grown still more desperate.

The whole party had returned to the break in the floor of the canyon.

Here there was a gradual descent to Lost River, owing to the peculiar way in which the rocks had fallen in, but it was a regular cascade with the water rushing down over it at a furious rate.

Below those who could get near enough to look down saw the river rushing off into the darkness.

Ned shuddered when he thought what was expected of him.

He was supposed to have ridden along this underground stream, it appeared.

This was the time that the boy heartily wished himself repairing locks again, and out of the king business forever.

"There's one thing about it that maybe you don't take into consideration, Orlando," said Pete, in his slow way, "and that ere may make the case, look a leetle bit less dangerous to you than it otherwise would."

"What's that?" demanded Ned.

"Why, it's just like this: The storm may not extend back to the sources of the river, probably don't. Now, as I look at it, the water what's running in at this here break, although it looks like a lot to us, don't really amount to so very much, after all. I don't believe as how the river has riz much, if any. That's my opinion. You can take it or leave it, just as you please."

"Some one has got to try the depth, and I am the one," said Ned. "I see that it's up to me."

He waited for no further talk, but holding his horse with a tighter rein, urged him forward, down the wet, slippery descent.

It was not every horse that would have done it, but Ned's did.

In fact, all these horses born and bred in the mountains were used to traveling in all sorts of rough places.

Deeper and deeper the animal sank, with the water rushing past him like a mill-race.

At last his feet rested on the bottom.

"I'm down!" shouted Ned.

"How deep?" called McCluckey, peering over the edge of the break.

"Up to my knees."

"That's all right; we can stand that, I suppose. Go along a little and see how the case is."

Ned urged the horse on a few yards.

"It gets shallower!" he shouted.

"Ach! heaven be praised!" cried Van Pots. "I t'ought I vas drownded already yet. Vell, I t'ink I can stand dat, all righd; dough it vill be up to my neck, I suppose."

And as a matter of fact it did come very near it.

Van Pots was the last to go down, and he had a terrible time forcing Gold Dust to make the descent.

The others were all in line before him.

Ned had lighted a saddle lantern, which he captured in the outlaws' camp and brought along with him, without ever dreaming how handy it was likely to come in.

"Forward!" cried Ned, boldly, and he urged his horse on through the underground stream, followed by all hands, who kept as close together as possible, in order to get the benefit of the light.

Butt McCluckey rode ahead and put himself alongside Ned.

"Well, this is a great start, Martinez," he said, in a low voice. "I don't want to throw no scare into the boys, but I'll be golbusted if I like this. Do you really think we will ever come out of it alive?"

"It depends entirely upon how the water rises," replied Ned.

To talk without knowing what he was talking about was not his style.

"Where do we come out?" asked McCluckey

"Do you know my old hold-out?" asked Ned, alluding to the hut.

"I was never there, as you know."

"But you know where it is?"

"I only know what you told me."

"You will see it soon if we can make it. And you will find three dead men there, killed by Pete's gang."

"Ach! I'm drowned already yet!" Van Pots called out. "De vater ish ofer Gold Dust's pack. Vat shall I do?"

"Halt!" cried Ned. "Put the man on the back of one of the horses. It's the only way."

McCluckey went back to attend to it.

The horse was brought up alongside of Gold Dust and Van Pots stood up on the back of his jackass and was just about to climb into the saddle when all at once Gold Dust took it into his head to move on a step or two.

Van Pots gave a yell and went down into the water, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that they managed to fish him out and get him upon the horse.

Then there was a further advance along this mysterious stream for half an hour or so.

At last Ned began to hear sounds which filled him with fear.

They were evidently coming to a waterfall.

He could hear the water tumbling over the rocks.

"Where is this going to end, Orlando?" One-eyed Pete sang out. "Isn't that a waterfall on ahead?"

"It certainly is," replied Ned. "We must have taken a wrong turn, though I didn't know the stream divided anywhere. I'll ride ahead and see."

He urged his horse on, flashing the lantern ahead.

The roaring grew louder and louder.

At last the horse stopped and refused to move another step.

"This is the end of my rope!" thought Ned. "What on earth shall I do now?"

CHAPTER XVI.

DOWN THE SLIDE.

"We must go back. It is impossible to go any further this way."

"McCluckey is right," said Dan Nevins, in answer to the remark made by the leader of the Bullion boys. "To my thinking the only thing to do is to get back into the canyon and all hands tackle the stone heap and try to cut a way through."

"What does the King of the Canyon say?" added Pete. "He seems to have lost his grip. If he ever went down Lost River before I reckon it was in his mind."

"If you will give me a few minutes I'll investigate this thing," said Ned. "I'm not quite sure that matters are as bad as they look."

Ned thought that he had made a discovery, though as yet he was not quite sure.

Flashing the lantern about he saw that there was a narrow ledge of rock running along the left-hand wall of the cave.

He was able to slip off the saddle and gain a footing there without stepping into the water.

Keeping the light ahead of him he crept cautiously along the ledge until he came to the brink of the fall.

It was about ten feet to the bottom of the descent.

To get the horses over it would be an absolute impossibility.

"Just as I supposed," muttered Ned. "Now for the next."

He turned and crept back along the ledge, stopping at a place where there was a narrow break in the wall.

The opening was about four feet wide; there was just room enough for a horse to pass comfortably through.

"I shall leave you in the dark for a few moments, gentlemen," cried Ned, and he ran on along the passage.

It was a steady ascent, extending for a distance of perhaps two hundred yards, when, to his great satisfaction Ned suddenly came out into a vast cavern.

It extended off on all sides, and the roof could not be seen.

"This lets me out for the time being," thought Ned, "but where on earth does this place lead to—that's the rub."

He hurried back and stated the case.

"There's a way into a big cave here," he said. "I confess I know nothing about it, but there must be a way out of it. I move we take our chances. There seems nothing else left to do."

Of course, nobody offered any objection, for the situation was such that it would have been useless.

The horses were urged to mount the ledge and all hands passed through the passage into the cave.

An hour's ride through the darkness followed.

The cavern seemed to be endless; there was no sign of either wall or roof.

The oil in the lantern had about burned out when suddenly McCluckey sang out that he saw daylight ahead.

"I see it!" cried Ned. "We are coming to the end at last!"

They pushed on with all possible speed toward the light, coming out through a narrow opening into a large "sink."

At first glance it seemed as if they had not bettered themselves a bit, and after an hour's wandering about the place they were all still of the same idea.

This singular vale was about a mile across, and precipitous cliffs rose on all sides, towering above them to a height of hundreds of feet.

Except by the cave no way of leaving the sink could be discovered, and yet it seemed as though there must be a way, for at a point very close to the middle there were the ruins of an old log hut and barn.

It stood in the midst of a grove of trees; in fact, the whole place was pretty well filled with them.

The ground all around the hut had been dug over for gold and one or two of the trenches looked as if they had been quite recently made.

While these investigations were in progress McCluckey shot a fine antelope which bounded across their path.

It was now almost noon, and as the horses were tired and everybody was hungry, the gold was unloaded and a fire built in the hut. Packard and Dan Nevins, having prepared the antelope, undertook to roast it whole, and Van Pots agreed to loan knives and forks, of which he had a good supply in his pack.

While these preparations for dinner were in progress Ned started back among the trees behind the hut, and took his stand behind a giant cottonwood, from which he stood peering out.

The boy was trying one of his shrewd moves again.

Ned possessed the rare gift of being able to read something of a man's thought in his face.

He had been watching One-eyed Pete's face very closely for some time, and he had become thoroughly satisfied that the fellow knew more about their rocky prison than he was willing to confess.

No attempt had been made to hold Pete a close prisoner, for it did not seem to be necessary. The outlaw had been disarmed at the start, but since they came out of the cave he was allowed to do pretty much as he pleased.

Just now Pete was edging away from the hut, the attention of every one being engaged either with the horses or the cooking. He thought, evidently, that no one was watching him, but Ned's eye was right on him for all that.

"He knows all about this place, and I'm betting on it," thought Ned. "Hello! He's on the run!"

Pete had been getting in among the trees.

He was no sooner out of sight than he started running, striking across an opening, and disappearing among the trees beyond on the side opposite to the cave.

"There's a way out over there just as sure as fate," thought Ned, darting after the outlaw.

It was less than half a mile to the wall of the sink on that side, and Ned soon covered the ground.

Fast as he had run he saw nothing of Pete until just before he reached the wall.

The outlaw chief was standing with his back to the wall, looking toward the woods.

Ned pulled up, and hiding behind a tree peered out at him.

"Did he see me?" he muttered. "I wonder if he did? He must have heard me coming. By thunder! What's become of the man?"

Pete had vanished right before his eyes, passing apparently through the solid wall.

"He knows this place well," thought Ned. "I'll give him a minute or so to get out of the way, and then I'll investigate on my own account."

Pete did not reappear.

Ned went over to the wall after a few minutes.

One glance was enough to show him all its secrets.

He wondered how they could possibly have missed seeing it when they made the rounds of the wall around the sink.

"A projecting rock half hid the opening, to be sure, but there it was, the mouth of a narrow natural tunnel."

Ned hurried through it—the length was not over forty rods—and came out upon a ledge overlooking a deep fertile valley which at first glance he took to be the one they had left in the morning.

The descent into the valley was comparatively easy; the slope was rocky but not very steep.

Right in front of where Ned took his stand was one of those remarkable formations of which there are several known instances in the Far West.

One noted one in Utah goes by the name of the Devil's Slide.

Here one vast rocky ledge extended to the valley a thousand feet or so below.

Beyond the slide was the broken rock just alluded to.

The slide itself was a depression in the ledge a foot or two in depth.

It was the work of a glacier in some prehistoric age, no doubt.

The surface of the rock inside the slide was of a greenish color, and as smooth as glass.

Ned bent over to examine it.

He had previously looked around for Pete, but could see nothing of him.

Now was the time he found out where he was, though.

Crouching behind a big boulder which lay on the ledge was the outlaw chief.

His one eye had been right upon Ned from the first.

Stealthily he crept up behind the boy, and raising his foot, gave him a smart kick as he bent over the slide, shouting as he did so:

"That's for the King of the Canyon! It's the last time you will ever cross my path."

And, indeed, it looked as though it was the end of all things for poor Ned.

His feet shot from under him, and he went flying down the slide.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE KING OF THE CANYON FINDS HIS GANG.

Ned had walked right into a trap.

One-eyed Pete, with a single hasty glance down the slide, hurried off along the ridge, making no attempt to descend the broken rocks.

Evidently he knew the spot perfectly well, and was acquainted with some easier way of getting down into the valley below.

Ned flew down the slide like the wind.

Fortunately for him he fell flat on his back, and he rested easily enough on the slippery stone.

The boy thought fast.

As he flew on he had no hope of saving his life; that did not come to him until some seconds later on.

His speed was now slackening.

The slide was growing less steep.

"I'm going to come out of it all right if this thing only goes down to the level," thought Ned.

Fortune favored him in that.

The slide did extend down to the level.

Some seconds more and Ned touched the ground.

He had heard the outcry before he reached it.

"Look! Look! Why, it's the King of the Canyon! It's the captain!" a voice sung out, and the instant he sprang to his feet Ned found himself surrounded by a band of fully fifteen men.

They were tough-looking citizens every one of them.

Three were full-blooded Indians, there were several half-breeds, and the rest were white.

All wore big boots and great cowboy hats, and each had a skin coat. In fact, they were dressed very much as Ned was himself, and it was only necessary to give them one glance to see that they were a hard gang, toughs of the worst kind.

"By heaven, this is luck, just as sure as my name is Buck Brander!" cried one. "Cap, where did you drop from? The clouds? It's to be hoped you have changed your mind, for if you haven't we are going to do you up just as we said. Leader or no leader, you know what we all swore. The first one who goes back on the gang dies, and you, Orlando Martinez, better known as the King of the Canyon, would be dead now if you hadn't given us the slip!"

This speech was made in a slow, solemn voice.

Every man had unslung his rifle, and as they surrounded Ned all eyed him threateningly.

Near by was a fire with a haunch of bear's meat roasting over it.

Ned, quick-witted as he always was, divined the truth at once.

These men were the outlaws who until now had been the

followers of the "King of the Canyon," and it was quite evident that they never doubted that he was the king himself.

Here was a strange situation and one which would require all the diplomacy the boy possessed to enable him to save his life.

There was nothing for it but to agree to all they said.

There was a good deal of the actor about Ned, and he acted his part to perfection then.

"Well, boys," he exclaimed. "Here I am, and I tell you frankly I had no intention of being here. I was up on the ridge and in the sink. I managed to lose my balance, and that's what brought me here among you. Looks as though I was just about in time to have some dinner. And I shan't mind it a bit."

"It's a wonder you are alive," said Brander. "What you have just done I wouldn't do for all the gold we brought away from old Irving's bank."

"Oh, you did the job, then?" said Ned, carelessly.

"Yes, we did it in spite of you," retorted Brander. "We brought away dust worth twenty thousand dollars good."

"That so?"

"It is."

"Where is it now?"

"Buried back there under one of the tents. We shan't divide it until we have cleaned out the Bullion. Then there will be a division of it all before we quit the country, which we are determined to do in spite of you. These here mountains have become too hot to hold us. As I told you before, I have positive information that a company of soldiers is on the way from the fort to clear us all out of these mountains. Pete's gang will have to go with the rest. That last gold wagon he held up did the business. It's no use talking, boss, you opposed the bank raid and you opposed the raid on the Bullion, but it's going to be did just the same."

"When?" asked Ned.

"To-night."

"Well, I don't know that I have anything to say against it. I've been thinking it all over, boys, and I give up. Have it your way. As for me, I'm going out of the business as soon as we quit here, that's all."

"Well, that's more like it," said Brander. "Where have you been since the row?"

"Knocking about the mountains."

"What took you up into the sink?"

"Went up to see One-eyed Pete."

"Been to hold a confab with One-eyed Pete in his old hold-out? Been giving away our plan about the Bullion? If I thought you had I'd make blame short work of the King of the Canyon right here and now!"

Had they seen Pete on the ridge?

Ned wondered. He hardly knew what answer to make to this.

"I have given nothing away," he carelessly replied. "If I can't work with you at least I won't work against you. No, no, boys. I'm sick of the business. Let Buck lead you. I'll just follow this trip."

"You bet your sweet life you will follow," growled Buck.

"You don't leave us till the job is done."

This was the end of the conference.

The rest of the day Ned lay around the camp.

There were four or five good army tents here and some splendid horses.

The band seemed to be entirely on the outs with their former leader, and very little beyond casual remarks were made to Ned.

He would have tried to make his escape if it had been possible, but it wasn't.

A big Indian named White Crow kept a constant watch over him, and when he started to walk a little way down the creek White Crow was right behind him, together with a big hulking fellow who passed by the name of Jack Weatherwax.

All through the afternoon the men played poker, while Ned spent most of his time lying stretched on the grass, half asleep.

Whatever the real nature of the quarrel between the King of the Canyon and his men was, it evidently had been pretty serious. Not one of them seemed to suspect Ned, but he did not seem to have a friend left in the entire gang.

Thus matters stood at sundown, when supper was served.

Ned got his share of the cold bear's meat, as he did of the hot earlier in the day.

The gang talked freely to each other, but no one said a word to him.

Supper was no sooner over than preparations for another poker game began.

It was now growing dark, and Ned determined to make another effort to escape.

He strolled down toward the creek and, bending over, proceeded to wash his face, looking under his legs to see if White Crow or Weatherwax were behind him, but neither of them were.

On the opposite side of the creek there was a thick clump of cottonwoods, beyond was an open space, and beyond that the woods.

"If I only dared to swim the creek and take to the woods," thought Ned. "I suppose they would shoot me sure if I tried it."

He raised up and stood looking across the creek, when all at once a figure stepped out from behind the trees.

Ned caught his breath and stood staring.

He was looking at his double.

There stood the real "King of the Canyon" on the opposite side of the creek.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DISCOVERED

"He was there. I am sure of it. I could not have made a mistake."

Ned was rubbing his eyes and staring over at the cottonwoods.

The King of the Canyon had disappeared on the instant, and here was Ned wondering whether it had been the real thing or if he had seen a ghost.

He was still puzzling himself about it when his sharp ears suddenly caught the sound of the tramp of horses in the distance.

He listened; there was no mistaking it, but the card players did not seem to hear.

This might mean serious business, and Ned turned back to the camp just in time to see White Crow hurrying toward him.

"Well, White Crow, I suppose you hear them coming?" he said, carelessly. "Who do you suppose it is? One-eyed Pete's gang down upon us, or the soldiers from the fort?"

"How! How! Me hear nothing!" cried the Indian. "Boss, what you mean?"

"Listen!" said Ned, holding up his hand.

"Ugh! Me hear!" cried White Crow, and he sounded the alarm.

Everybody was on their feet instantly.

"What is it?" cried Buck Brander.

"Horsemen coming! We must be ready for them!" exclaimed Ned. "If you want to follow your old leader I'm ready for you, boys."

The horses were hobbled a little further down the creek.

Taking his chances of getting on somebody's pet animal Ned ran to them and, cutting the hobble of a fine roan, leaped to the saddle, which had not been removed.

"Ha! You know your own horse all right," cried Buck Brander. "That looks like old times. What became of your rifle? Did you leave it behind you in the hut when you started out?"

"It's enough that I haven't got it," said Ned. "Lend me one, Buck. If this is Pete's gang nothing would please me better than a brush with them."

"And nobody can give 'em a brush better than yourself. You shall have my spare Remington. This is like old times come again."

Buck brought the rifle from one of the tents, being the last to mount his horse.

"There they are!" cried Ned, pointing down the valley on the opposite side of the creek, where in the dim light a band of twenty or more men with cowboy hats could be seen dash-
ing along.

"Look out for the cap, sellers!" cried Weatherwax. "Who knows but what he may have betrayed us to Pete. I wouldn't trust him as far as I could sling a bullet by the tail after what has occurred. He wouldn't never have got no rifle from me."

Ned heard this speech and felt that something must be instantly done or he was liable to get a bullet in his back.

He drew his horse out to one side, wheeled sharply around, and reined in.

Reversing the rifle, he presented the stock, saying:

"Gentlemen, there is your rifle. Ride on and I will bring up the rear."

"No, you won't!" growled Buck Brander. "I gave you that

rifle because I wanted you to have it. Lead on, captain. It don't matter what he says."

"Then let nothing more be said," cried Ned. "Either that or we part company forever."

"As to that, it would be good for your health not to ride away from us," returned Brander; "but you can try it if you want to get a bullet in your back."

After that there was no more talk.

Ned dashed on over the flat floor of the valley toward the approaching band.

They were soon discovered, and the riders came to a halt and drew hastily up into line.

One glance at them was enough, for although there was no such thing as seeing faces there was no mistaking Van Pots and his white jackass, and besides that at the same instant Gold Dust let out an awful bray which might have been heard at the top of the mountain.

It was the Bullion boys and their gold!

Ned's heart sank.

"What will they think of me?" he said to himself. "How can I fire on them; and yet if I don't I'm as good as dead."

The thought had no more than crossed his mind when Buck Brander came dashing up alongside.

"Who are they, Leandy?" he exclaimed. "What about them boxes slung over the saddles? Hang me if I don't believe it's a gold train!"

"That's what it is, evidently," replied Ned.

"It's a lot of fellows down from the Bullion mine just as sure as fate, and that there feller on the jackass must be Van Pots, the peddler. I — Hello! By heaven, what's this? You're no more the King of the Canyon than I am! You're a fraud."

"What do you mean?" demanded Ned, clutching his rifle.

"What do I mean? I mean that Leandy Martinez has lost the little finger of his left hand, and you haven't. Strange I never noticed it before! Who in thunder are you?"

The words were no more than out of his mouth than Ned, spurring his horse ahead, wheeled around in the saddle and fired.

"My name's Ned Wilbur. Take that to remember me by," he sung out, and dropping down and lying alongside the horse, Indian-style, he went dashing on toward the Bullion boys like the wind.

His aim had been for Brander's right arm and the bullet hit the mark.

Brander dropped his rifle and fell back in the saddle, shouting:

"Shoot him, boys! Shoot him! He's a detective—a spy!"

The crack of a dozen rifles followed, and the shots flew around Ned like hail.

CHAPTER XIX.

NED FALLS INTO TROUBLE AND FINDS HIMSELF WITH FRIENDS.

"Py t'under! It vas de King of de Canyon! He vas not dead or turned traitor, but alive already yet!" yelled Van Pots, as Ned came dashing up to the Bullion boys' line.

All eyes had been upon him since he left the outlaws' line, and a dozen rifles covered him as he approached.

Upright in the saddle again Ned sprang with a bound.

"Gentlemen, I am here!" he cried. "I never meant to desert you. Through following One-eyed Pete I met with an accident, and ran against the old gang. There they are all ready to do you, and I am on the dead outs with them forever. Stand ready to defend yourselves or you are lost."

"And you fight with us, Martinez?" cried McCluckey. "Is that the idea?"

"It is; you saw me begin the fight. Now let's end it. They are a lot of scoundrels. They contemplate an attack on the Bullion mine this very night. Show them no mercy, for they will show you none."

The outlaws had halted as if uncertain what to do for the moon had now arisen and the valley being nearly as bright as day they could see that the Bullion boys were heavily armed.

"It is going to be a tough fight," said McCluckey, "and there is no telling who will come out ahead. We managed to find our way out of the sink through looking for you and Pete, and after passing through a tunnel and along a ledge we found our way down into this valley, but further than that we have no more idea where we are than the dead."

"What we want to do first is to put those fellows on the run," replied Ned. "Once we have done that we will have no difficulty in getting out of this. They are going to make a

charge for us presently, and it will be all over in a minute with some of us dead like enough."

"What about charging on them?"

"I wouldn't advise it. We have got a mighty good position here with the mountain on our left and the creek on our right. The best thing we can do is to hold it, I say."

"Right; and we will leave it to you. There they come!"

The outlaws had evidently come to the conclusion that something must be done.

Throwing themselves single file with Jack Weatherwax in the lead, they came sweeping down upon the Bullion boys, filling the air with their wild shouts.

The Bullion boys received them drawn up in line as they were.

Every rifle spoke, not only once; but twice—three times—and the return shots flew thick and fast.

Several were wounded on both sides, and Ned himself was one of the first to go down.

All he remembered of it afterward was the rattle of the shots and then a stinging sensation in the left shoulder and a sense of falling.

His horse must have picked up a bullet at the same time, for he went dashing into the creek, climbing the bank on the other side.

Although it seemed to Ned that both the shot and the fall came together, in reality it was not so.

He clung desperately to the saddle, and did not lose his hold upon it until he was across the creek and was swept off by the low hanging branch of a great cottonwood.

Dropping then among the bushes Ned lost all consciousness and lay as one dead.

The next thing Ned Wilbur knew he was looking at himself.

He was still lying on the ground and yet he was standing up and looking down at himself.

He closed his eyes, weak and confused. He could not understand what it all meant.

"Well, young fellow, so Lizette was right, and you are not dead, after all?" a voice was saying.

It seemed to be speaking a long way off, and at the same time Ned's senses slipped away from him again and the next he knew he was lying under a rude shelter of bushes with Lizette bending over him and his mysterious double sitting by his side.

It was like waking from a dream, and the strangest part of it was that Ned felt perfectly comfortable, and all his strength seemed to have returned.

"There! He has waked up. He is himself again, Orlando!" Lizette exclaimed.

"Why, there's nothing the matter with me," cried Ned, sitting up. "Lizette, where have you been?"

"Nothing the matter?" said Lizette. "Why, you were shot, that's all. Orlando took the bullet out of your shoulder and bound up the wound, and you never knew it. That's how badly you were hurt, Ned."

"Orlando! The King of the Canyon! Then you are not dead?"

"Evidently not. I am here all right, and was in time to do for you the same favor you did for me."

"And what has become of the Bullion boys? How did the fight go? I tried to help them the best I could."

"You did nobly, Ned, and I saw it all," was the reply. "As for the fight, my band were put to flight with at least half of them put out of business forever. I have just returned from guiding the Bullion boys into Black Tail Canyon. They never knew the difference. They thought it was you."

"Yes," added Lizette, "and there was no use in telling them, Ned. Orlando and I can take care of you, so we let them go their way."

"And you?" said Ned. "What became of you when you went back for the horse?"

"There I am to blame," replied Lizette. "And I ought not to have done it. When I reached the horse who should I find standing beside it but Orlando. He had been brought into the hidden valley by an Indian——"

"By an Indian whom I had once befriended," broke in the King of the Canyon. "He found me where you left me, Ned, and extracted the bullets which Pete's men put into me, at the same time binding up the wounds with a liniment which has done wonders for them, as it has also done for you. I thought that you and the Bullion boys would pass out by the canyon all right, and as I did not care to show myself and expose you, I persuaded Lizette to go away with me and the Indian to this place where I had every expectation of finding my band. You see, I had quarreled with the boys and I was

going to make it up; but this little girl here has changed all that, and—and——"

"Oh, tell him," said Lizette. "We have fixed it up between us, Ned. Orlando and I are going to get married, and he is to give up the old life forever. We were only waiting here to see the gang move off when you suddenly appeared among them. After that we did not know what to do. Orlando was watching you and trying to get a chance to communicate with you. Besides, he had an idea that the gold dust stolen from my father's bank might have been buried in the camp, as that was the way the outlaws generally handled the gold they stole. Well, it has all gone differently from what we expected. Orlando has searched for the gold but he cannot find it, so just as soon as you are able to travel we will start back for Gander's Gully. Orlando cannot follow us. He is wanted by the sheriff, and must leave the State, but I shall join him later. I am determined, and even if my father objects I shall keep my word."

CHAPTER XX.

NED FINDS THE STOLEN GOLD.

Ned passed the remainder of that night quietly in the shelter, sleeping most of the time.

At daybreak he arose, and, leaving both Orlando and Lizette sleeping, went down to the creek, stripped off his clothes, and plunged in, enjoying the bath as well as any he had ever taken in his life.

He was dressing himself when Orlando came hurrying up.

"Are you mad?" he exclaimed. "What on earth possessed you to go into cold water with an unhealed bullet wound in your shoulder? It may cost you your life."

"It never will," replied Ned. "Cold water never hurt anybody yet, taken either externally or internally. I'm a perfect crank on bathing. Thanks to you and your Indian liniment and the bath I feel as well as I ever felt in my life."

"Well, it is your business and not mine, I suppose," replied Orlando. "You owe me no thanks, though. If it hadn't been for you I believe I should have died before my Indian friend came to my rescue. You saved my life all right, Ned Wilbur, and I never shall forget it. Heavens! How much we do look alike. Isn't it strange?"

"It is," replied Ned. "The only difference seems to be that you have lost your little finger. That's how Buck Brander got on to me. The only wonder is he didn't notice it sooner than he did."

"That finger was shot away in a fight," replied Orlando. "The wonder is they didn't kill you. You see, those fellows made a regular pet of me. While they put me forward as their leader and called me the 'King of the Canyon,' Brander was really the leader of the band. It was all well enough when I was a boy but I'm tired of the life now. Lizette has talked me out of it. I told the boys as much, and they jumped on me the worst kind of way. There was a big row and I barely escaped with my life. Only four fellows stuck by me. We went to that hut where you found me. That was one of our holdouts. Lizette came as you know, and while we were just getting ready to start down the canyon with her to take her home, for of course I could not think of her remaining there through the night, a lot of Pete's men swooped down on us and carried her off. Some one told Pete about the bank robbery. He thought I was in it, and they expected to get the gold. By the way, do you suppose I can possibly be any relation of yours?"

"I don't think so," replied Ned. "Yet it might be. My father's brother, who is now dead, was killed by the Indians somewhere in Idaho, and his son, a boy about my own age, was carried off captive."

"I shouldn't wonder one bit if you were my cousin. I was bought from a band of Indians by a Mexican miner named Martinez, who kept me with him till he died. Since then I have been knocking about with a hard gang who were his friends."

"It's possible that you are right," replied Ned. "But look here. Why don't you come with me to San Francisco? I shall go right back as soon as I have repaired the lock of Mr. Irving's safe. I can easily get you a job there for I have lots of friends. Of course, you can't marry Lizette until you have made money enough to keep her."

"I'll do it," said Orlando, "and there's my hand on it. I am determined to quit this life altogether, and to try and earn an honest living, but now, Ned, since you are feeling so well, we must get ready for a start. I have the horse Lizette turned over to me that time hidden in a small cave near here,

and the one which you brought away from the gang, and which by the way is mine, is there, too. He picked up a shot, but it don't seem to have hurt him any. I think we had better get on the move."

"I'm ready any time," replied Ned. "But there's one thing that ought to be attended to before we leave here."

"I know. You allude to the bank gold. You told me last night that Buck Brander said that he buried it under one of the tents. They left the tents behind them, and after you went to sleep I was over there again with a lantern, but I could see no place where the ground seemed to have been turned over recently. I think Buck must have lied. Still, I mean to have a look by daylight before we leave."

"What's the matter with going now?"

"Nothing at all."

"Let's do it, then."

"I'm with you. Come on."

"Is it safe to leave Lizette? Suppose the gang returns? Where do you think they have gone?"

"They can't return very well without our seeing them, and as to where they have gone I haven't the least doubt that it is to join with One-eyed Pete's band. It had been talked of before. I believe Buck Brander engaged Pete to have those poor fellows who stuck by me killed, and of course I was to be included. You see, Ned, when they found that I had turned against the business they became horribly afraid of me. I know too many of their secrets. I have been in many a hold-up with them. I would make a bad witness against them in case the sheriff ever does catch them, as some day he surely will."

The two boys now started for the outlaws' camp, which lay on the other side of the creek, about half a mile away.

They crossed the creek at a point where it was narrow enough to jump over, and soon found themselves among the deserted tents.

"Who were the thieves, Orlando?" asked Ned.

"I don't certainly know," was the reply, "but I believe Buck Brander himself to have been one of them. We had better pull apart now. You take one tent and I another. The sooner we get out of this the better, for back they surely will come."

The outlaws had left quite a number of things behind them, and as a good supply of provisions and a barrel of whisky was among the rest Ned was quite willing to believe that Orlando was right.

When he discovered the whisky barrel Ned stood wondering how they had ever got it into the valley with a cart.

This made him wonder how heavy it was, and he took hold of it to find out.

As he pulled it toward him he saw that the earth underneath the barrel had recently been turned up.

"By gracious, I've found it!" exclaimed Ned, and he ran out of the tent and called Orlando to him with a shout.

"Have you got it?" the King of the Canyon cried.

"I believe I have. Under the whisky barrel."

"Exactly. I might have guessed it. Yes, the ground has been dug up here. Pity we haven't a spade."

"Isn't there one in some of the other tents?"

"There ought to be. I'll look for it."

"Is this a permanent camp of your band, Orlando?"

"As permanent as any we ever have. It has been here about two months now. Of course, the boys don't occupy it all the time, they come and go."

Orlando hurried out and soon returned with an old spade.

A few moments' active digging brought the treasure to light.

They struck an old box, and in it were the bags of gold dust.

Whether it was all there or not of course there was no means of telling until it was weighed.

Lizette was up and about when they returned to the shelter with the first load.

"Oh, how you frightened me," she exclaimed. "I could not think what had become of you. Have you really found the treasure? Neither of you are fit to be doing work like this, though."

"There's nothing the matter with me at all," declared Ned. "I never felt better in my life. That Indian liniment must be wonderful stuff."

"It's the greatest healer on earth, I do believe," declared Orlando. "I think if I was to try to make a business of selling that it would bring me a fortune. Only trouble is I don't know what it is made of, and my Indian friend won't tell."

Leaving the bags they had brought in the care of Lizette, the boys now hurried back for the remainder.

They had already secured the bags and were on their way out of the camp when Orlando sprang back among the tents.

"They are coming," he gasped. "We have got to hide. If they catch us now we are as good as dead."

Ned did not need to be told.

He had also seen the band of mounted men rounding the point of rocks beyond the slide.

"Just as I supposed," exclaimed the King of the Canyon. "There's as many as forty of them. Buck Brander has persuaded the boys to come to his idea at last and has joined forces with One-eyed Pete."

And this was something which Ned needed no information about either, for Pete himself rode at the head of the band.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN TROUBLE AGAIN.

"Lie down flat. Don't even breathe, if you value your life. If they get on to us we are lost."

This was what Orlando said when the boys crawled in among the bushes behind the tents.

The caution was needed, too, for a moment later the whole band rode into camp and dismounted.

"So he came down alive, did he?" One-eyed Pete exclaimed, looking up at the slide. "I never would have believed it. I thought I had done up Orlando that time for sure."

"I reckon your boys did him up all right in the hut," replied Buck Brander, whose arm was in a sling. "Who this feller can be I can't imagine. He looked enough like Orlando to be his twin brother. However, we will look up his body by and by, and see if there hain't some papers or letters or something on to him to show who he is."

"You're sure he's dead this time?" demanded Pete.

"There hain't no doubt about that. I plugged him with a bullet myself and saw him fall."

"Let him lie there and rot. What difference does it make who he was? Now, how about this dust? I hope you will stick to your bargain, Brander, and give me and my boys their share?"

"Well, now, what do you want to say that for?" retorted Brander. "Isn't that what we are here for? The whole business is buried in my tent in the original bags just as we took it from the bank. It shall be weighed and divided equally. I only hope you will stick to your end of the bargain, Pete, as close as I shall stick to mine."

"You bet we will. I've had it in for the Bullion boys this long time. This shall be our last stroke in the mountains, Buck. We will clean out the gold room and burn every building, and then retreat over the Canada line."

"Good enough. We don't want to lose time about it either. I can't see why it shouldn't be done in the day time just as well as at night. The boys who got away with the gold last night will put in the day at Gander's Gully, no doubt, so if we can jump in right now there will be so many less against us. We'll start just as soon as we get through here. But come on. We had better be getting at the gold."

They moved away then to Brander's tent.

"Did you hear?" Ned breathed in Orlando's ear.

"I certainly did. Oh, I only wish I had my full strength. Still, such as I have shall be given toward breaking this thing up. As soon as we can get out of this I am off for the Bullion mine. You'll go with me, Ned?"

"Decidedly."

"And Lizette must go, too. I wish we were back there, but I wouldn't have missed this—not for all the gold in the bags."

This conversation had been carried on in the lowest of whispers, but it was brought to a close now by the sudden shouting from the tent.

"Running blue blazes!" Brander's voice was heard roaring out. "Some one has been here ahead of us! They have carried off every bag!"

The outlaw came rushing out of the tent wild with rage.

One-eyed Pete followed more slowly.

Ned could see that his face wore a sneering smile.

"Say, it's too blame bad, hain't it?" he drawled. "What a pity it happened just before we came along."

"What do you mean?" demanded Buck Brander, fiercely.

"Oh, I don't mean nothing, of course."

"Yes, you do, blame you! You want to make it out that I have had that gold dug up myself. You know that well enough."

There was more said on both sides.

The quarrel began to get hot, and it looked as though there might be a fight.

"Ned, now is certainly our chance," breathed Orlando. "We shall get no better one. Get the bags together, crawl along through the bushes till we get around the bend in the rock, and then make a dash for the creek."

"I'm ready; but they will see us when we try to cross," answered Ned.

But they didn't.

They managed to cross the creek unobserved, and soon had gained the camp.

To their surprise they found the horses ready saddled.

"I saw what happened," said Lizette, "so I slipped up to your cave and got the horses, Orlando."

"Good enough. You are always up-to-date," exclaimed Orlando. "Nothing to hinder us from making a quick start now, and by gracious, we need to. There's going to be a fight up there, and that means a rush down the valley for the party that gets whipped."

The gold was tied on to the horses and they were in the saddle a few minutes later.

Ned rode Orlando's horse, which seemed to be none the worse for its wound, and Orlando got up behind Lizette.

Away they flew down the creek, the thick growth of cottonwoods preventing them from being seen by those on the other side.

They were obliged to cross the creek in order to get out of the valley, however, and to do this the King of the Canyon chose the only place where it could be easily forded, which was about a mile below the camp.

No shots had been fired behind them, and it began to look as if matters had been patched up between the rival gangs.

This was indeed the case, and all hands had already started down the creek, so it happened that when Ned and his friends struck across there was the gang led by One-eyed Pete just coming around the point of rocks.

"Thunder! We are caught now!" cried Orlando. "What a pity we could not have got through the gate of the canyon unseen."

A wild shout went up from the outlaws, but it was impossible to distinguish words.

"I don't believe they can tell who we are from this distance," said Lizette, looking back.

"Faster! Faster!" cried Orlando. "If we keep it up we may escape them yet."

The valley soon began to narrow, and the mountains to close in ahead of them.

"We can fix 'em!" said Orlando. "I'll put them out of business and give them a ten-mile run to the Bullion mine against our five."

A short and very narrow canyon lay right ahead.

In a few moments they were in it, passing through a natural rocky gateway not four feet wide.

All around great boulders lay strewn. There was one particularly big one resting on a ledge just over the gateway.

"Halt!" cried Orlando, and reining in he slipped from the saddle.

"You see that big stone, Ned," he said. "It is just toppling. Give me a hand at it, and down she goes."

They climbed the ledge and both put their shoulders to the stone.

It fell with a crash, completely blocking up the entrance to the canyon, so that no mounted man could possibly pass.

But the noise of its fall was tremendous, and Lizette's horse, taking fright, seized the bit in his teeth and went dashing down the canyon closely followed by Ned's, leaving the two boys on the ledge staring after them in dismay.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN THE HANDS OF JUDGE LYNCH.

"Ned, this is a bad job. I've no more idea which way that poor girl has gone than the dead."

"It is a bad job," replied Ned, "but from what I have seen of Lizette I should think she ought to have been able to control the horse soon. She seemed to understand her business perfectly well."

"When a horse takes the bit between his teeth, what woman can control him?" said Orlando. "It is all my fault. I should have been more careful. The question is, though, which way did they go? I have no doubt Lizette finally succeeded in controlling the horse, but how to find her—there's the rub."

"Won't she come back here, don't you think?" Ned asked.

"Can she find her way back? She knows but little about

this part of the canyon. Mighty few do, and I am one of the few. Well, we shall have to hunt her up, that's all."

"And the Bullion mine? In the meantime Pete and your gang will be down upon it and our chance is gone."

"It will take them two hours to get around to Black Tail Canyon. It's a good ten miles, and up-hill all the way. No, I think we shall have to let the people at the Bullion take their chances. Just now I am more interested in Lizette than anything else."

This conversation took place at a spot already familiar to Ned.

After the accident the boys strode along rapidly to the end of the canyon, which, as has already been mentioned, was only a short distance away.

To Ned's surprise there they were in the sink where he met Van Pots with canyons and canyons branching off on every side.

Of course Lizette might have gone on through any one of them. It was quite impossible to tell, and deprived now of the means of riding, it was hard for the boys to know what to do.

"It's no use. We must push on one way or the other," sighed Orlando. "I tell you what we will do; we will go straight on to Black Tail Canyon; there we will separate. I can't go to Gander's Gully, for if I show myself there I shall be immediately arrested and like enough lynched. My idea is that Lizette has been able to guide the horse into Black Tail Canyon, and will push on home. You shall follow her and I will go up to the Bullion and give the warning. Taking everything into consideration, I think that will be the best way."

"All right," said Ned, "I'm in your hands. I've nothing better to suggest except that if I find Lizette is not home I shall immediately hire a horse and ride in here."

"Do it," replied Orlando. "And I will get a horse at the Bullion and ride down Black Tail and meet you at the place where the cross canyon strikes in here. You had better come back, anyhow, and let me know."

Having thus arrived at an agreement, the boys pushed on as rapidly as they could.

They made but poor time. The fact was both had over-exerted themselves, wounded as they were, and both were beginning to feel the effects of it.

"By gracious, Ned, I'm about played out," exclaimed Orlando after a little. "I'm awful sorry, but I shall just have to stop and rest."

"I was just going to propose it," said Ned, "for I'm getting as weak as a cat myself. There's such a ringing in my ears. Is it my imagination or do I hear horses coming toward us now?"

Orlando sank down upon a stone and sat listening.

"It's no imagination," he said, after a moment. "I hear them. Your ears are sharper than mine."

"Perhaps it's Lizette."

"I don't know," replied the King of the Canyon weakly. His head fell over on Ned's shoulder, and he was just recovering from a faint when a band of some twenty mounted men came dashing up.

They were all strangers to Ned, and looked like miners, as indeed they were.

A large man with a heavy black mustache led the band.

He set up a shout when he saw the boys, and exclaimed:

"By thunder, what's this! Two of them! We have caught the King of the Canyon all right, and here's his twin brother with him. Surrender, you two, or we'll blow you galleywest. Which is which? Which is the King of the Canyon? Which of you is the real thing?"

The big man had evidently been drinking; he swayed in the saddle as he thus called out.

Those with him were for the most part in a similar condition. All were heavily armed, and a dozen rifles covered Orlando and Ned.

The moment Orlando caught sight of them he pulled himself together and staggered to his feet.

"I am the King of the Canyon, Sheriff Trafton," he said proudly. "You have got me at last, and I surrender. This young man has nothing to do with me or my band."

Half a dozen stalwart fellows were off their horses in an instant and surrounded the two boys.

This was a party of miners organized by the sheriff to hunt down the outlaw bands whose frequent robberies had become a serious hindrance to the work of the mines.

"You never will make us believe that this fellow isn't your brother or at least one of your gang, Martinez," returned the sheriff, thickly. "Tie 'em up, boys. They did the Gander's Gully job all right. The King of the Canyon was seen to get

off the stage and go to the bank. Tie 'em up. Get 'em on the horses and we'll run 'em down to the Gully jail."

The men who surrounded the prisoners glanced meaningly at each other, but made no move to obey.

"Why don't you do as I tell you?" roared the sheriff. "What are you holding back for just as we have met with success?"

"We don't intend to take these boys to jail, sheriff," spoke up one of the men. "You know that big live oak at the mouth of the canyon, I suppose?"

"Well, I guess!" retorted the sheriff. "And what then?"

"It's Judge Lynch, then," replied the man quietly. "It's no use to oppose us, boss. We made up our minds from the start that we would lynch the King of the Canyon if we caught him."

"But which one is the King of the Canyon?"

"Which is which it's hard to tell, for these boys are as much alike as two peas, so we will make a sure thing of it by hanging both of 'em, and don't you dare to open your trap against it; 'cos if you do we shall hang you, too."

Here was a bad turn of affairs for the boys.

They were tied hand and foot now, and lifted upon a horse.

The sheriff made no move to interfere. He was too much afraid for himself.

The ride back to Black Tail Canyon was quickly accomplished.

Here at a point where the canyon took a sharp turn stood a gigantic live oak with great spreading branches.

All hands speedily dismounted.

Ropes were produced and tied around the necks of the two boys.

"I protest against this outrage in the name of the law!" shouted the sheriff, and it was all the poor man could do.

"Protest and be blowed!" retorted the miner who proposed the lynching. "Now then, say your prayers, you boys, for you you will be launched into eternity in just about two shakes of a lamb's tail."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RESCUE BY THE BULLION BOYS.

"Are you ready?"

"All ready."

"Then hoist away!"

It was the death signal for the King of the Canyon and poor Ned.

But there is "many a slip 'twixt cup and lip," and the lynchers did not hoist.

They were just about to pull the ropes when an awful sound rang around the bend of the canyon.

It startled the lynchers to hold back their hands for the moment, and the next a big white jackass with a little hunch-backed Dutchman bestriding him came dashing upon the scene.

"Whoa, Gold Dust! Whoa, Jamany!" he shouted. "Mein gracious, vat is dish? You don'd orter hang dose poys—no!"

The lynchers under the live oak scattered, for Van Pots—purposely, Ned always believed—while appearing to use every effort to stop Gold Dust, really spurred the jackass right in among them.

"Come on! Come on! Dey vas killing de king! Mein gracious, I must have trunk too much schnapps already. I see two kings! Dey vas killing dem both."

A clatter of hoofs was heard while Van Pots thus shouted, and an instant later the Bullion boys, led by Butt McCluckey, came dashing upon the scene.

The lynchers, who were from another mining camp altogether, and knew none of the boys from the Bullion, naturally mistook them for the outlaw band, while the sheriff, who was the only one who understood the situation, never said a word.

"Fire!" shouted McCluckey, and the Bullion boys pulled in and, unslinging their rifles, let fly.

It was too hot for the miners.

They flew to their horses, and springing into their saddles went dashing into the cross canyon, followed by another round of bullets from the Bullion boys, purposely aimed high.

No one was left of the party but the sheriff, who was laughing so heartily that he turned black in the face.

But McCluckey sprang from his horse and cut the ropes away.

"What does this mean?" he demanded. "There are two of you. Everybody else may be drunk, but I'll swear I'm not. I wish somebody would explain."

It was hard for Ned to make the Bullion boys believe his strange story, and probably they would have continued to

discuss it much longer than they did if it had not been for Orlando's announcement of the intended attack upon the Bullion mine.

"We must get up there at once," declared McCluckey, "and the King of the Canyon goes with us. As I can't be quite sure which is which, both of you fellows had better go."

"I protest," said the sheriff. "These boys are both under arrest."

"That's nonsense," said McCluckey. "Best thing you can do, sheriff, is to go, too, and lend us a helping hand."

"All right," replied the sheriff. "I'm quite willing. I've entered my little protest, and that's about all I can do under the circumstances. You fellows seem to be hand-in-glove with the King of the Canyon. Might I ask why?"

"You may, and we have no objection to telling you," replied McCluckey, and he proceeded to tell of the part Orlando and Ned had played in saving the gold.

"We got it safe to Gander's Gully, and it's in the bank now waiting for the stage to call for it," he added. "It would have been in the hands of the outlaws as sure as fate if it had not been for these two boys."

"Did you see anything of a young lady on a horse, with another horse behind her as you came up the canyon?" Orlando now asked.

"Nothing had been seen of Lizette, and it was with feelings of deep anxiety for her safety that the boys started to accompany the Bullion boys and the sheriff back to the mine."

The Bullion mine was located in as lonesome a spot as could be found in the entire range, and more than that, it was so located as to be peculiarly open to attack, being at the extreme end of Black Tail Canyon, up against a towering wall of rock some seventy feet high.

On each side of the narrow enclosure were similar walls, the rocks being flat on top. To fire down from them onto the mine was an easy matter, but on the other hand the entrance to the enclosure was so narrow that a small but determined band could easily defend it against a large force.

"Is there much gold at the mine?" Ned asked McCluckey, who rode beside him. Each of the boys had been provided with a horse.

"About as much again as we brought away," was the reply. "What bothers me, though, is for fear Pete will get in there before we can head him off. Mr. Hyland, the super, is down sick with the ague, and there are only six men at the mine, including the cook and the engineer. We hated to leave under the circumstances, fearing something like this, but the company were kicking because we didn't ship, so we felt that we had to. You see, we had a strike at the mine a while ago, and a good many of the boys lit out and didn't come back again. Since then we have been short-handed. What we really ought to do is to let one fellow ride ahead and give the warning, but I must confess I don't care to go myself with One-eye Pete and that big gang on the war-path."

"I'll go," said Ned. "If the King of the Canyon can go with me."

"I'm ready," said Orlando, "but I suppose I'm arrested. What does the sheriff say?"

"I'd go mein ownselluf," put in Van Pots, "only I know well dat efery von of Pete's gang needs suspenders, und I'm afraid dey would clean out my packs und nefer pay me von plaine cent."

"Go on, you two boys, if you want to," said the sheriff. "I am satisfied that you mean to do what's right now no matter what you may have done in the past, and I'll not interfere."

Three minutes later Ned and Orlando were dashing up the steep slope, leaving the slower going horses of the Bullion boys well behind.

"Heavens, Ned, this is a great relief," called the king when they were out of hearing of the rest. "I gave myself up as a goner that time. How did you feel?"

"I hardly know," replied Ned. "I was scared, of course, but somehow I couldn't manage to get up much excitement about it. Something seemed to tell me that I should escape, and when I heard Van Pots' jackass bray I knew it was all right."

"I suppose I'm good for State's prison unless I light out," said Orlando. "I know the sheriff expects me to do that very thing."

"And will you?"

"I would if it wasn't for Lizette. I'd skip just as soon as I warned them at the mine, but there's no use talking. The girl must be found."

They had now reached a place where the trail kept close to the wall, and was so narrow that they had all they wanted to do to keep from tumbling into Black Tail Creek, which

went rushing along over its rocky bed some sixty feet below them.

"Look! Look!" cried Orlando, suddenly. "As sure as you live a horse went down there, and, by thunder, there he is!"

It was a place where the loose rock at the edge of the precipice had been recently broken away.

Far down in the bed of the creek lay a horse with the shallow water rushing over him.

"It's mine! The one you rode!" cried Orlando. "He is dead."

Had Lizette's horse met with a similar fate?

They could see nothing of it, but of course the girl must have gone that way.

"She got control of the horse and rode on to warn them at the Bullion!" declared Orlando. "She knew that I was good to take care of myself and you; or at least she thought so, although she came mighty near being mistaken, just the same."

"Push on! Push on!" cried Ned. "We are losing time. We don't want the boys to come up with us and find that we have not finished our job. How much further is it to the mine?"

"Not half a mile," replied Orlando. "We shall soon be there now, and I'll bet you what you like we will find Lizette there a head of us."

Orlando was quite right.

A little later when they went dashing through the narrow pass which led in to the buildings of the Bullion mine they saw Lizette's horse standing in front of the door of the superintendent's house, and Lizette herself on the steps talking to the engineer.

"The King of the Canyon!" cried the man, and involuntarily he drew his revolver.

"Don't shoot!" exclaimed Lizette. "They come as friends. You see now, sir, that I told the truth."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

"Hark! They are coming!"

"Some one is coming sure."

"It may be our boys."

"Mr. Hyland, the superintendent of the Bullion mine, well wrapped up in a bear skin coat, and looking very white and sick, stood at the entrance to the big shaft house talking to the King of the Canyon and listening to the rattle of horses' hoofs outside the entrance to the pass.

The few men who remained at the mine were there with him, and so were Ned and Lizette, of course.

It was just as Orlando had said about Lizette. The brave girl did not regain control of the horse until the frightened animal was well up Black Tail Canyon, and the other horse, slipping on the edge of the bank, met with his fate.

Being then so near to the Bullion, Lizette felt it her duty to ride on and tell the superintendent what she knew, and besides this she felt that the gold which she carried would be safer at the mine than in the road.

She had just made her startling communication when Ned and the King of the Canyon came dashing up.

The superintendent at once got off his sick bed and all hands armed themselves and made ready for serious business.

They were not kept long in suspense.

Nearer and nearer the horses approached, until just at the entrance to the pass leading in to the mine they halted and a solitary rider ventured in sight of the mine.

It was One-eyed Pete himself.

"Gee! They are all ready for us," he shouted. "The King of the Canyon has got in ahead!"

He wheeled about and rode back.

Ned would have fired, but Orlando held him back, saying:

"Keep your fire for close quarters, boy. There will be a charge in a minute, and we shall want it then."

"We can never stand up against them," groaned Mr. Hyland. "Oh, I do wish the boys were here!"

"It is better to have the boys behind them than right here with us now," Orlando replied. "The gang must have cut in from the cross canyon, and so missed them, but the boys can't be far away."

He had scarcely spoken when a wild war-whoop rang out down the canyon.

"Coming!" cried the king. "Fire the instant they show themselves."

"All depends upon the reception we give them now."

An instant later and the rifles were cracking on both sides.

White Crow fell dead, One-eyed Pete dropped almost at the same instant, and Buck Brander went down, too.

"Hit 'em again. Hit 'em again!" shouted Orlando.

Once more the rifles spoke, and answering shots came from behind the outlaw band, who wheeled around to face a new foe.

For the sheriff and the Bullion boys were right behind them now.

Hemmed in between two fires there was no escape.

The King of the Canyon led his little force forward. But McCluckey pressed on with the Bullion boys from the other side. Caught in their own trap with their leaders dead or dying, there was nothing for the outlaws but to call for mercy, and they surrendered to a man.

Two of the Bullion boys were killed, and one of the miners met with the same fate; several were wounded on both sides.

It was all over now.

The prisoners were tied to their horses and the sheriff, now thoroughly sobered, put them all under arrest.

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Hyland, "this is truly great, and we owe it all to the King of the Canyon and his double here, who is as brave a boy as I ever saw."

"And don't forget Lizette," said Orlando. "She fought as well as a man."

Just then Packard came up to them and said that One-eyed Pete was dying and wanted to see the King of the Canyon before he breathed his last.

"You come, too, Ned," said Orlando, and together they stood beside the dying man.

Pete was almost gone. His single optic rolled fearfully.

"You!" he gasped, pointing to Orlando. "I stole you when you were a boy and sold you to the Indians. Your real name is Wilbur. What's his?"

He pointed then to Ned, but he never lived to get the answer, for just then the blood gushed from his mouth and he was gone.

"I knowed it," cried Van Pots, who stood near. "Dey vas twin brudders. I said so from de fust. Nefer mind. Peezness ish peezness, if any von vants to puy suspenders, I haf de pest in de market ride here in mein pack."

Not brothers, but brothers' sons, that is what Ned and Orlando were. This was fully proved.

Back to Gander's Gully with the sheriff and his prisoners was the next move of Orlando, Ned, and Lizette.

Here the King of the Canyon was placed under arrest with the others—it was something the sheriff had to do.

Mr. Irving, the bank cashier, was of course delighted at his daughter's safe return, and it is quite needless to remark that he was equally delighted at the safe return of the stolen gold dust, which upon being weighed was found correct to an ounce.

Next day Ned repaired the time-lock and put the safe in working order again.

That night he left for San Francisco, taking Orlando with him.

True to the promise which he made the King of the Canyon before they left the Bullion mine, the sheriff telegraphed the full particulars of the affair to the governor of Idaho, who immediately wired back a full pardon for the outlaw boy on condition that he would immediately leave his jurisdiction.

This Orlando was only too glad to do, for he was firm in his determination to lead a different life.

Ned and he became warm friends, and for several years lived together in San Francisco.

He obtained a chance for Orlando to learn the machinists' trade in the safe factory, and the boy worked very steadily, and both he and Ned are to-day members of the company, occupying positions of trust.

Two years ago Orlando married Lizette. They now reside with Mr. Irving, who left Gander's Gully soon after the robbery and opened a private bank on California street, San Francisco.

Of late both Orlando and Ned have taken an interest in mines, and they are now heavily interested in the Bullion, of which Butt McCluckey is superintendent.

The region up around the canyons is no longer troubled with outlaws since the death of One-eyed Pete and the imprisonment of the gang.

Although a heavy owner in the Bullion, Orlando never visits the mine.

He has never set foot in Idaho since he left it, and few are living who recognize in the prosperous Mr. O. Wilbur the former "King of the Canyon."

Next week's issue will contain "OLD KENNEDY'S KID; OR, THE BOY WHO WORRIED THE BROKERS." By H. K. Shackleford.

CURRENT NEWS

M. Ditmars, a farmer living one mile southeast of King City, Mo., claims to be the oldest corn grower in this county. Ditmars is seventy-nine years old, and this season he planted and cultivated a ten-acre field of corn. He did this in addition to other chores.

A bolt of lightning struck a negro man near Scotland, Ga., blistering a place the size of a man's hand on his thigh, then ran down his leg, leaving scars as upon a pine tree. A child, held between the man's knees at the time, was knocked into the air, but was uninjured. A bed and clock in the same room were demolished.

A hen owned by William Quigg, of Sunbury, Pa., when it was denied a nest of eggs it had stolen and started to hatch, appropriated a brood of kittens. The hen spread its wings over the kittens each night, and in daylight would forage for food just as though mothering a brood of chickens. Finally the mother of the kittens, after a decisive battle, regained her brood.

A forty-foot flagpole toppled to the ground into the midst of a large crowd gathered for a balloon ascension at the North End Boat Club, Newburyport, Mass., killing John Pray, an eleven months old baby, in his carriage and seriously injuring his mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Pray, and William B. Squires.

Heading four generations, William C. Wright says he is the oldest resident of Wisconsin. Mr. Wright is one hundred and one years and five months old. He makes his home with his son, William H. Wright, near Amery, Wis. Mrs. Elizabeth Handbeit, daughter of William H. Wright, and her son, Norman, make up the fourth generation circle. The aged Wright is a pioneer resident of the State.

Thousands of dead fish line the banks of the Truckee River below Derby Dam, near Reno, Nev., as a result of battering themselves to death in efforts to get over the dam. Photographs of the dead fish have been taken and forwarded to Washington, where appeals have been sent by hundreds of sportsmen asking for a fish ladder, ever since the construction of the Derby Dam. Many of the dead fish are large salmon from Pyramid Lake.

"Eleven days in jail or fifty-two Sundays in church," said Police Judge Wilson after John Yeater, of Wabash, Ind., had pleaded guilty to the charge of intoxication. The prisoner declared the church to be his preference. Then the court made inquiries and found that Yeater was not affiliated with any religious denomination. Consequently he was compelled to choose a church where he is to attend service for the next year. The pastor has promised to report to the court the first Sunday that Yeater fails to show up.

A crowd witnessed a snake fight recently. A king snake and a moccasin were discovered in deadly combat near a spring. The king snake had the moccasin's head in its mouth when discovered and the moccasin had its tail tightly twisted around a root on the water's edge, the king snake being unable to loosen the hold so it could finish the job. Onlookers broke the moccasin's hold from the root and the two snakes were carried to a clear opening nearby, where the king snake made away with the moccasin by twisting around its rival and squeezing its life out. Then the king snake swallowed the moccasin and crawled leisurely back to the spring.

Big black bears are roaming the mountains of Alpine in droves. They are crossing from one chain of mountains to another, searching for feeding ground, and are often encountered by travelers. Two youngsters—Homer White, aged eleven, and his brother, Milton White, aged nine—found themselves in the path of a big black bear on Hancock Hill. The boys were not prepared for the occasion, but their huntsmen's instinct was quickly to the surface. Running back home they enlisted their two older brothers in the chase, got a gun and returned to bruin's trail. They came upon the big fellow in a little valley, and about 30 yards distant. The boys fired three shots at the bear, but their aim was poor. Bruin struck into a fast gait and soon disappeared into the mountains.

The extraordinary brilliance of the diamond is due to its great refractive power in transmitting rays of white light. The largest known diamond is the Rajah, which once belonged to the Sultan of Matan, in the island of Borneo. It is an egg-shaped stone, weighing 367 carats. At one time the governor of Borneo offered for it \$500,000, two war vessels fully equipped, a number of cannon, and a quantity of powder and shot; but this offer was refused, the rajah believing that the fortunes of his family were connected with this gem. The most famous diamond, the Koh-i-noor, is in the possession of King George V., and once the pride of the great Mogul. When in the rough it weighed 900 carats, but now, after various cuttings, it weighs but 123 carats. The Orloff diamond, once the eye of an Indian idol, and now the property of the Emperor of Russia, is an egg-shaped stone of great beauty, weighing 102½ carats. A historical diamond is the Regent, or Pitt diamond. In weight it is 136¾ carats; and in clearness it is unrivaled; its form is nearly perfect, its diameter and depth being almost equal. It was found in Golconda, and brought to England by Mr. Pitt, grandfather of the famous Earl of Chatham, and sold by him to the Duc d'Orleans for £130,000. It afterward decorated the royal crown of France. Napoleon used it to ornament the hilt of his sword, but it was taken by the Prussians at the field of Waterloo, and now belongs to the German emperor.

THE COUNT OF CONNEMARA

—OR—

The Old Pirate's Secret Treasure

By J. P. Richards

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER IX (continued)

Father and son were reclining in the easy chairs, to which they were secured by strong cords.

They stared from one figure to the other in dire amazement, Lord Draco saying:

"I did not know that you had a brother, John Thomond. It is amazing."

"I will amaze you more yet before you are a year older, Draco. Young man, can you see well out of that one eye?"

"Pretty well, Mister Pirate," boldly answered Myron Draco, who was in great pain.

"Then look at this other Captain Crow and see if you know him."

The other pirate removed his mask, when the young sailor at once exclaimed:

"Barry Conamore, as sure as death! Father, I knew I heard his voice that night in the fight when I was lying wounded in the cabin."

"So you did," said the young deserter. "And how I longed to meet you on the deck of your father's frigate, and to give you another beauty mark on your left cheek."

"It is a pity they lost their eyes, so that they could see us better," chuckled the old pirate. "I will have to wait until they are better."

"For what?" asked Lord Draco.

"To settle with you for good. Now, let us get to business at once."

"What of my daughter, Thomond? I may have injured you in the past, but she is a sweet, innocent young girl, and you were once an honest man."

"Thank you; but I can't say as much for you. Was not my young wife a sweet, innocent lady before you stole her?"

"I tell you again that I know nothing about your wife, John Thomond."

"And I tell you that you lie. Your daughter is now in my power, and you will never see her again if my wife is not restored to me."

"But if your wife is dead?"

"If she is you killed her; and you will suffer the agonies of the infernal regions before I am through with you."

"Kill me at once then if you don't believe me; but don't be so cruel as to act the coward to my innocent daughter."

"If I killed you, I would never see my wife again, I fear, as you alone know the secret of her mysterious disappearance. Your daughter will be safe in my hands. If she chooses to fall in love with my young friend here, she may, as they will sail together for some time."

"Then you are resolved to bear her away?"

"I am that. Restore me my wife and I will give you back your daughter. What is that signal, Barry?"

The young man hastened to the window, when one of the pirate crew sprang up the balcony, saying:

"One of the servants escaped and made off to the town, captain."

"Then away with you to the cove at once, mate, and be careful of the young lady. Treat that big fellow as one of ourselves."

The pirate disappeared, and the young captain turned to whisper a few words to his old friend.

Captain Sable then said to the old prisoner:

"We are off now, Draco, but we may soon meet again. Remember, you will never see your daughter again, unless my wife is restored to me. If the Remorseless goes down at sea, your girl is lost."

"And remember, Captain Draco," said the young man, "that I command the Remorseless whenever you come out to fight her. We will also meet again ere long."

The two black captains sprang out on the balcony, leaving the father and son groaning with pain, rage and apprehension.

At that same hour a gay scene was presented in the old Cuban's mansion, the grounds of which adjoined those of Mount Draco.

Magnus Costello was giving a reception to his Irish and Spanish friends in Galway, in honor of his young guest, the Count of Connemara.

That handsome young gentleman was the hero of the hour, as the account of the duel was the subject on all lips, and Captain Draco was not a favorite among the wealthy Irish and Spanish families in Galway.

The spacious drawing-rooms were thronged at eleven o'clock when the old Cuban led his young guest and his daughter forward among the throng, introducing the former to all as "his cousin from the West Indies, the Count of Connemara."

All the ladies present, young and old, were charmed with the young count, while the young men declared that he was "just the man to bear a title called after their grand old mountain."

The young count led Maria Costello to the first dance, but the music had scarcely started up, when loud cries of alarm were heard outside, and into one of the drawing-rooms rushed the little black boy, crying, in Spanish:

"The pirates—the pirates! They have attacked the next mansion, and they will be here soon."

The young count drew his sword and ran to the door, crying:

"To arms, gentlemen, and defend the ladies."

Cries and screams resounded on all sides as the guests heard the bell at Mount Draco ringing out, while along the road dashed a company of dragoons from the city.

The old Cuban called on his male servants to arm themselves, saying:

"It may be only a false alarm. Don't disperse, good friends, as the pirates must not spoil our frolic tonight."

The young men formed around the young count on the lawn in front of the mansion, and the old Cuban led his armed servants to the rear.

(To be continued)

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

RIVER FISH 7 FEET LONG.

The record fish has been caught. The fish is an alligator gar. It was caught after two hours of hard work in a slough off the Mississippi River, near Quincy, Ill. Its length is seven feet two inches and its weight 209 pounds. Its mouth, open, measures nineteen inches across. Around the body its measurement is thirty-eight inches.

MAIL CARRIERS SWAP JOBS.

Frank Burton, a letter carrier of Hoboken, and Frank M. Langworthy, of Salt Lake City, Utah, agreed to change places in serving Uncle Sam. Burton has a longing for the Western country and, through a friend, got into communication with Langworthy. The latter, desiring to make a change, agreed to come East. Postmaster-General Burleson and Postmaster Joseph J. Kennedy of Hoboken have sanctioned the arrangement.

SUICIDES IN THE GERMAN ARMY.

Two German to every one French and four Austrian soldiers commit suicide every year, according to statistics recently published by the Vorwaerts. In the forty years from 1870 to 1910 there were 10,315 suicides in the German army, 2,655 attempts at self-destruction and 304 voluntary mutilations in order to escape military service. There were, however, only 40 cases of suicide in the navy between 1885 and 1893. Prussian conscripts furnished the largest number of cases per thousand, with Saxons second and inhabitants of Wurtemburg third. There were 198 adjutants and 2,101 non-commissioned officers included in the total. The proportion of suicides in the army was almost twice as high as in civil life.

1,000 ACRES OF PEPPERMINT.

Lewis S. Marshall and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Benjamin, of Leslie, Mich., say they gained more practical knowledge of farming from their trip to the Owosso Sugar Beet farm than they did at the State Fair.

They found 350 houses for the employees, all on the farm and all just alike. They have their own school, church, and postoffice.

Two of the largest peppermint distilleries in the world extract the essence from the mint grown on 1,000 acres, and besides there are 510 acres of sugar beets, 100 acres of cabbage, 100 of alfalfa, 40 of wheat, 200 of corn, 10 of carrots, 130 of barley, 20 of bluetop turnips, 7 of horseradish, 500 of hay, 1,000 of pasture, and stock to carry on the work of this immense farm.

BURIED A STRANGER, THINKING IT WAS SON.

A letter from Robert H. Hayes, Pryor, Okla., dated July 28, to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Hayes, revealed the fact that they had buried a stranger in Fayette, Mo., under the impression that they were burying their oldest son Robert.

Mrs. Hayes saw the body of her supposed son when it was brought here from Sedalia, where the man was killed by a Missouri Pacific train. She had had a feeling since that the body was not that of her son, although a scar on the right temple, the result of a horse's kick, and the similar build, led her husband and three other members of the family to believe that it was Robert. She told a local newspaper man before the receipt of the letter from her son at Pryor that she had a presentiment that her son was not dead.

The question now is, who was the man who was buried, and can Mr. Hayes recover the \$250 for funeral expenses for the burial of the stranger?

Several friends of the Hayes family in Fayette who saw the body that was shipped here expressed doubt as to its identity, but the matter was kept quiet. Everett Hayes of Salisbury, a brother of Robert Hayes, was sent to Sedalia to identify the body of his supposed brother. He was not positive, but finally consented to have the body sent to Fayette. Another brother who saw the body was sure that it was Robert. The false identification was caused by a former resident of Fayette, who saw the body of the man in the railroad yards at Sedalia. E. J. Hayes is one of Fayette's wealthy residents. He will try to ascertain the real identity of the man who was buried here and to recover the funeral expenses, which he paid.

A NEW TEST FOR PITCHERS.

A device constructed by a firm in Bridgeport, Conn., to measure the velocity of bullets, has now been applied to determining the speed with which a pitcher throws a baseball, says the American Boy. If this test is generally applied we will soon have another column to add to the tabulations of pitchers' records.

Walter Johnson and Nap Rucker, big league baseball pitchers, were the ones who took part in the test in question. Johnson's best trial showed that he had thrown the baseball at a speed of 122 feet a second. Rucker's mark was 113 feet a second. Both men had trouble in using the apparatus, so that it is probable that neither attained his best speed. Yet even the rate of speed which Johnson attained in this test enables us to understand how it must feel to face him in the batter's box. Translated into more familiar terms, the ball in the test traveled at the rate of something more than eighty-three miles an hour.

The bullet from an automatic revolver travels at the rate of 800 feet per second, and from a high-powered rifle at a speed of 2,000 feet per second.

The apparatus used consists of a wooden frame across which fine copper wires are stretched. The baseball is thrown through this screen, thus establishing an electrical contact and recording the exact instant of the passage of the missile. A steel plate exactly five yards away receives the impact and records the time of arrival, thus providing the data from which the speed may be determined.

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FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher

168 West 23d Street

New York

Professor Vauni, an Italian, has succeeded in rearing dwarf guinea pigs by exposing the mother to the action of the X-rays. Finding that long exposure to the rays produced sterility, the professor tried the effect of short exposures, and the result was that the young of the animal treated were, at maturity, much smaller than the mother.

A substantial cash prize will go to the French soldier who captures the first German flag taken in the war. Paul Charnier, a manufacturer of flags in Paris, offered a reward of 5,000 francs (\$1,000) to the Frenchman, no matter of what rank, who wrests away from its bearer the first Teutonic standard. He deposited the money in cash with *Le Matin*, a daily newspaper.

The Creusot Steel Works has presented to the French government twenty-six complete batteries of 105-millimetre guns of a new type which had been ordered by a foreign government just before the war broke out. The company informed the government that it stood ready to pay indemnity for the non-execution of the contract. As the manipulation of the gun requires special knowledge, a number of Creusot workmen have enlisted to handle them. The gift represents a value of over \$3,000,000.

In a sermon delivered at a union meeting on the courthouse lawn, Noblesville, Ind., the Rev. Gertrude Reinier, pastor of the Friends' Church, attributed the small at-

tendance at churches in the summer to the automobile. "The people, it seems to me," she said, "would rather spin over the country in their machines, regardless of the danger and dust, than to attend church and hear the gospel expounded. As a result, we preachers usually speak to empty pews on hot days, while at least two-thirds of the population of the country is whirling through the rural districts, propelled by gasoline power with no object in view except pleasure."

A game rooster, a hawk, and an Irish terrier figured in a desperate struggle the other day in the chicken yard of Robert Nixon, a farmer, living near the Whippany River, N. J. Nixon heard a commotion in the chicken run. He had missed several ducklings and chicks, and he believed they were being stolen by raccoons, possums, or weasles. When he ran toward the hennery he saw a huge hawk swoop down inside the wire inclosure and attempt to seize a small chick in his talons. The mother started for the marauder, but one swoop of the hawk laid her low. When the hawk set after the chicks again a game cock called Blarney started out for him. It was a battle royal for a few minutes, but the rooster was soon lying on the ground, played out. Teddy, the Irish terrier, next jumped into the fray, and as the hawk was rising with chicks the dog grasped the bird by the throat and hung on. Nixon killed the hawk, which measured 5 feet 4 inches between the tips of its wings.

THE BOY WHO DID IT

—OR—

ALL FOR THE GOOD OF THE TOWN

By William Wade

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER VIII (continued)

A moment later it was caught in the eddy and went whirling on at the rate of twenty miles an hour and more.

"By thunder, we are caught!" cried Charley.

"I should say we were!" echoed Rod. "I'm sure I don't know what we shall do!"

Away they flew.

The boys stood leaning upon their now useless poles, watching the bushes as they flew past them in the moonlight.

"If we could only work a little nearer in shore we might grab the bushes, Rod!" Charley exclaimed.

"Yes, but what good would it do?"

"Not much, I suppose. It is all swamp in there."

"Of course it is. Reaches for miles and miles."

"Then I suppose we have got to go into the Mississippi."

"On to it. I don't propose to go into the river till I have to."

For some moments after this the boys said but little, for to talk was useless.

As the case stood, nothing could stop the progress of the raft.

Five minutes later they swung around into the Mississippi.

In the bright moonlight they could see quite a distance down the river.

There was the boat half a mile ahead of them, running close in to the swampy shore.

"Look! Look!" cried Charley. "They are fighting among themselves!"

The men were having a lively time in the boat.

One tramp was standing up, striking at the others with an oar.

What the trouble was, Rod never knew.

What the end was, he saw a few seconds later.

Suddenly the boat was overturned and all three tramps fell into the river.

"That's the end of it!" groaned Rod. "The money is gone for good, now."

"It did seem a shame, but there was no help for it. I guess it's the end of them three snoozers, too!" cried Charley. "I don't see nothing of them, Rod."

The tramps did not appear to make even an effort to save themselves.

Perhaps none of them knew how to swim; at all events the boat drifted on, bottom upward, and was lost among the bushes at last.

Rod and Charley viewed all this with sinking hearts.

They said but little, for their own danger was very great.

Here they were caught in the swift current of the Mississippi, being whirled along at great speed.

Charley began to grow very nervous.

"Rod!" he exclaimed at last. "What in the world are we going to do? I don't see how we will ever get ashore."

Rod made no answer.

The fact was, he did not see, either.

It looked to him very much as if they were going to their death.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HERMIT ON THE ISLAND.

The raft swept on for the distance of a full mile.

There seemed to be no chance of any change, nothing to hinder the boys from being carried down the river for an indefinite distance.

Rod was beginning to despair, when all at once something happened to raise his hopes.

The boy chanced to be looking off to the right of the raft when all at once he was startled at the sight of the tin box, which he had supposed to be at the bottom of the river long ago, bobbing about on the water like a cork.

"Great Scott, Charley, there's the box!" he exclaimed.

"Hang me if it isn't!" cried Charley.

"Of course it is! Oh, if I could only reach it!"

"Why don't it sink?"

"That's more than I will ever tell you. Pole, Charley! Pole! Perhaps we may manage to work over to it. It would be a horrible pity to lose it now!"

The boys seized the poles and worked with a will.

The best they could do was to keep abreast of the box.

This continued for some time.

The race between the raft and the box began to grow quite exciting.

After a little the raft seemed to respond to the paddling with the poles a little, or else the box moved over their way, but whichever it was, Rod saw that he was soon going to be able to reach the prize.

Another moment and his hand closed upon it.

He drew the box cautiously toward him and was able to lift it upon the raft.

"Good! Good! You've got it!" cried Charley. "But I can't understand what makes it float!"

"Nor I, either. No matter, we have got it, anyhow. Oh, what a night this has been!"

Poor Rod was just beginning to realize how tired he was with all these efforts; perhaps he had not fully recovered from the blow on his head.

He felt just like lying down flat on the raft and giving it all up; and perhaps he might have done so if he had not happened to perceive just then that they were running into a small, wooded island which lay right ahead.

It was one of a group of many islands stretched along the shore.

Rod ran to the front of the raft and stood ready.

"If we can catch hold of those bushes we may be able to make a landing, Charley!" he cried.

"Try for it!" shouted Charley, getting up in front, too.

The chance came a moment later.

(To be continued)

INTERESTING TOPICS

WOMAN LAWYER FOR CHINA.

With an ambition to be the first woman lawyer in China, Miss Yarlock Low, of Oakland, Cal., junior at the State University and summer session student, is pursuing the course preparatory to that of law.

Miss Low has chosen the Ping Yang Province at the field for her endeavors and believes that by the time she has won her degree China will be ready to receive a woman attorney.

The Chinese student already has won many honors in the classroom in the regular and summer session terms. She is considered an adept in parliamentary procedure and is accomplished in debate.

31,000 SHIPS IN WORLD.

The world's carrying power practically has doubled during the past twenty years and now includes about 31,000 vessels with an aggregate capacity of 47,000,000 gross tons, according to figures by the Department of Commerce. While the gross tonnage of American vessels engaged in lake and coastwise trade increased from 3,657,304 tons in 1883 to 9,789,561 tons in 1913, that of its vessels in the foreign trade decreased from 1,302,095 tons to 1,027,776 tons, an increase in the one case of 168 per cent. and a decrease in the other of 21 per cent. during a thirty-year period, in which the value of American foreign trade rose from \$1,250,000,000 to \$4,225,000,000.

CAN RAISE FINE POTATOES IN ALASKA.

Alfred Burbank is investigating the possibilities of plant development in Yukon and Alaska valleys. These valleys have marvelous capabilities for root crop production, he says.

"Give me time," said he, "and I will evolve a potato adapted thoroughly to Alaska conditions, free from water, equal to any grown in the world. A properly developed potato will enable Alaska, with thousands of square miles of fine valleys, to supply America with potatoes.

"Alaska should soon be exporting cabbages, turnips, celery and other root crops. Siberian apples should thrive in Alaska. About two hundred farmers have taken homesteads this summer in the Susitna and Tanana valleys. This year's potato harvest will for the first time supply Alaskan need."

PHILOSOPHY.

Some people at the theater are never so amused as when they cry.

Occasionally you meet men as intelligent as yourself.

More things will come your way if you go after them.

The man who kills himself usually kills the right person.

A good draughtsman may be no good at draughts.

Too many people spend to-day what they hope to earn to-morrow.

Plenty of men are always up and doing—others.

It's strange, but nevertheless true, that the average woman never answers the telephone bell without first of all smoothing her fringe and working up a four-ounce smile.

When a married woman loses her temper her husband is apt to catch it.

DOMINION TO SEND 1,000,000 BAGS OF FLOUR TO THE MOTHERLAND.

The British government has accepted "with deep gratitude" an offer of the Canadian government to send 1,000,000 bags of flour as a gift of the people of Canada to the people of the United Kingdom, to be placed at the disposal of the government and to be used for such purposes as it may deem expedient.

The government has contracted with the representatives of four big milling companies for the delivery of the flour, and shipments were begun during last month. The cost of this contribution of Canada to the motherland will amount to about \$3,000,000, and Parliament will be asked next week to vote the necessary funds.

The government has contracted for the purchase of the flour at present market prices. The flour companies have guaranteed delivery of the whole amount this month and the first consignment has already been delivered. The balance will be forwarded as supplies are available without interfering unduly with domestic requirements.

THE TORCH FISH.

There is a kind of fish that swims in the deep sea which is very rare, and a great curiosity, says the American Boy. Its common name is the torch fish. Its jaws are filled with long, slender teeth. It has a cartridge-shaped tongue, and a body very much like a worn-out old shoe that has become so limp that it cannot hold itself up in shape any more.

The most remarkable thing about this strange fish is that on the top is an egg-shaped object the fish can light up like the bull's-eye lantern whenever he wants to, and put it out again when he so pleases. This lantern does not serve as a guide to him in his wanderings, but is used as a trap to entice unwary and innocent little food fishes. When this deep-sea lucifer is hungry, he just lights his lamp, which is a peculiar kind of lip with phosphorus on it, opens his mouth, and waves before it a slender, cord-like appendage that grows from beneath its lower jaw. The small fishes mistake the light for a certain kind of tooth-some firefly that is down in the sea, and in their scramble for this dainty they sail right into the lucifer's mouth, which is gaping wide open to receive them. When he has had all the dinner he wants, he turns off the light and goes away about other business.

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

A clock that has run continuously for thirty-nine years is the property of John Ruch, who lives three miles west of Gentry, Mo. Mr. Ruch bought the clock in 1875, when he and his wife started housekeeping. He took it home, started it to running, and it has never stopped since. The clock must be wound every twenty-four hours.

A law recently adopted practically commits the Province of Alberta, Canada, to the principle of the single tax. With one or two exceptions, all the taxes except those on actual land values have been abolished. Improvement of any kind is exempt from taxation. Disciples of Henry George hope that other Canadian provinces will soon be persuaded to fall in line.

Two convicts were shot, one fatally, when they attempted to escape from the State penitentiary at Boise, Idaho. U. G. Bereups, serving a life sentence for murder, was shot in the spine. He died soon afterward. C. A. Allers, serving an indeterminate term for murder, was shot in the arm. He will recover. Two others dropped to the ground when the shooting began, and escaped injury.

Thrown from his seat on a mowing machine when his team ran away, A. Laughlin, a farmer, of Chico, Colo., was dragged or pushed along in front of the big knife for a distance of 100 yards. The knife, usually fatal in such accidents, proved to be Laughlin's salvation this time, for it served as a guard; and when his body caught beneath it, the strain checked the team. The man was badly hurt. His right arm was almost torn from his body.

Wisconsin's biggest farm is rapidly becoming larger. The Stark Potato Company cleared 400 acres in 1912, 1,000 acres in 1913 and appears bent upon clearing a still larger acreage this summer. This company now has seven camps, comprising 125 men, clearing land. A mammoth steam stumping machine is disposing of the stumps at a rapid rate. There will be more than 2,000 acres of cleared land in this farm by the end of 1914, and the company announces a determination to continue at this rate for several years.

Stephen Touart, former tax commissioner, is authority for the statement that an unidentified negro found a pot of gold in a ditch on Spring Hill avenue, near Margaret street, Mobile, Ala., several years ago, and disappeared with his wealth. Mr. Touart is a resident of the vicinity where the gold was found. He saw the hole in the ditch from which the pot was taken and in the same ditch the skeleton of a man was found. The negro was given a contract to dig a ditch along Spring Hill avenue, and while working on it found the money. River pirates of Mobile had their rendezvous there.

In denial of the rumor that the Panama-Pacific Exposition at San Francisco would be postponed because of the European war, this statement was issued by Albert Dellevie, general manager of the tourist bureau of the exposition: "The Panama exposition will not be postponed. The exposition buildings are completed and all the necessary arrangements have been made to make it a success. If the European situation should become even more serious it will not affect us in the least. Had this occurred during the preliminary stages it might have inconvenienced us. As it is we are in a complete state of preparedness and nothing can stop us. Of the thirty-seven foreign nations participating in the exposition only France and Austria-Hungary are actually engaged in strife."

Robert Cowan, eighteen years old, an amateur aeronaut, lost his life by drowning at Alton, Ill., because a revolver failed to work. His father, who was watching the ascension, had agreed to fire a shot when the balloon reached a height of 500 feet, as a signal to the boy to release his parachute and descend. The revolver did not go off when the father pulled the trigger, and the youth apparently did not hear a shot from a policeman's gun. Meanwhile the balloon drifted out over the Mississippi and collapsed. As the huge bag struck the water, it spread out and settled over the head of the aeronaut. A government launch hastened to the scene, and the crew searched through the folds of the balloon, but failed to find young Cowan. Many other launches joined in the search before he was given up as lost. Cowan had never made an ascension until four days before the accident at Alton. The young man's father is an experienced aeronaut.

The Hampshire Telegraph and Post reported the following recently: "A remarkable affair has occurred at Maida Barracks, Aldershot. A private of the Second Highland Light Infantry suddenly became demented in the barrack room. He loaded his rifle, opened a razor and threatened to kill every one in the room. His comrades retreated and medical officers were summoned from the Cambridge Military Hospital. One of them placed some morphia in a basin of tea, and when he tried to enter the room to induce the soldier to drink it the man prepared to shoot and the doctor retired. The camp fire brigade was then summoned. Hoses were run out to the windows in the room, and at a given signal jets were poured on to the man, who was quickly rendered insensible. He was subsequently taken to the Cambridge Hospital. Another account states that the man, taken by surprise, tried to get his rifle up to his shoulder, but was knocked over by the force of the water. In his fall the rifle was discharged, and the bullet narrowly missed his head. It is thought that the heat of the past few days is responsible for the man's condition."

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 2, 1914.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

A petrified frog was found buried in a sandbar in the Ohio, opposite Evansville, Ind., by William Davis. It is perfect in shape and apparently solid stone.

What is believed to be the smallest colt in Kansas was born recently on the farm of William Stafford, one mile east of Iola, Kan. The little animal weighed sixteen pounds and stands fourteen inches high.

William Denzer, proprietor of the Columbia Hotel, Greenfield, Ind., undertook to kill a rat by stepping on it. He missed, and the rat ran up his trousers leg. He caught the rat as it emerged at his waistband, but dropped it as it sank its teeth in his wrist. Denzer finally killed the rat.

In Athens goats are marched to housekeepers' doors and milked before the eyes of patrons. But this system does not prevent adulteration. The milkman wears a loose coat with wide sleeves. Around his waist is a rubber bag filled with water, and a tube runs down his arm. As he milks, he presses the tube, and milk and water flow silently together into the milk pail.

There will be no Coney Island Mardi Gras festival this year. The committee of Coney Island business men who were getting subscriptions for the annual event decided to abandon it. Only \$9,000 was collected, and at least \$15,000 is needed. The tightening of purse strings was attributed to the European war situation, but many persons declared that the poor business at the resort this summer was more likely the cause of the light subscriptions.

For several years a large swarm of bees has made its home in the steeple of the First Baptist Church of Dawson, Ga., and has been industriously storing up much honey in this improvised hive. Recently it was determined to take this honey, and the services of a steeplejack were engaged for the undertaking. He ascended the tall steeple and located the hive and took from it about 75 pounds of honey. The pastor of the church, the sexton and others were liberally supplied.

Bernard F. Weber, of Chicago, who has purchased 1,800 acres of land in this country in the vicinity of Mercer, Wis., expects in the next few years to have one of the largest stock farms in northern Wisconsin. At present he is having the land cleared and put under cultivation. A portable saw is reducing the timber and a steam tractor is turning up the soil where potatoes are planted. Brush land is being cleared up by 350 Angora goats shipped from Kansas City. This plan was tried in the region of Ladysmith, where T. M. Thomas made a similar use of the animals. Two goats to an acre of land are kept browsing until every twig of life disappears. The flock increases at a paying rate and the wool brings in sufficient to pay for their keep in winter. Thomas kept them at work two seasons.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

Little Boy—Isn't fathers queer? Auntie—In what way? Little Boy—When a little boy does anything for his papa he doesn't get anything; but if another little boy does it he gets tuppence.

Excited Lady (at the telephone)—I want my husband, please, at once. Voice (from the exchange)—Number, please? Excited Lady (snappishly)—Only the fourth, you impudent thing!

"How is it that your son's head seems to be drawn to one side? Only a year ago he was straight as an Indian." "I can only account for it through the fact that he did his courting on a tandem."

"Papa, the paper this morning, in speaking of the battle of Cardenas, says: 'She made no response to the New York's fire.' Battery isn't feminine, is it?" "No, my boy; you can silence a battery."

Visitor—I suppose you are glad that your husband has a job? Mrs. Doolan—I can't say that, I am; he gets drunk at nights now when I am at home, instead of in the daytime when I'm out working.

"Stimson said he would give me a good motto to put over the door of my bicycle repair shop." "What is it?" "Something from Dante, I think he said." "Oh, yes, I know—'Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.'"

Borrows—Nellie, hand me my umbrella, will you? It has commenced to rain. Mrs. B.—I lent your umbrella to Mr. Sweetfern last night. Borrows—What on earth did you do that for! Didn't you know it was his?

Here is a good story of the dangers of giving gratuitous information. A servant wounded her hand with the prong of a fork. In reply to her mistress' inquiries, she explained that she was very nervous lest the wound should become inflamed; as she believed the fork to be nickel-plated. "Oh, you may set your mind at ease on that score," replied the mistress, "those forks are all silver." The next morning forks and servant were missing.

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

CALIFORNIA'S GIANT GRAPEVINE.

Santa Barbara, in California, possesses celebrity as an old Spanish and monastic settlement, with quaint and impressive architectural relics. But many persons think chiefly of this enchanted spot, embosomed like Los Angeles and San José in flowers during most of the year, in association with its magnificent vines. These were imported originally by the Mission Fathers from Spain, and are of the so-called mission variety.

In the Centennial year the old landmark in the Montecito Valley, the monster Santa Barbara vine, was cut down and a large portion was removed to the Philadelphia Exposition. This demolition caused widespread pangs of regret, but it soon became known that relentless age had impaired the vitality of the great vine, and that the inevitable had only been anticipated by the hand of man. No record had been kept of the time of planting, but it was generally credited that it was close on a century old. The circumference of the trunk was very nearly four feet, and the arbor was about seventy-five feet square. The decay was regarded as premature, and was alleged to be caused by the changing of the course of a small stream which had flowed near its roots. But another adjacent vine, a cutting from the original, had attained nearly the same size. Thus Santa Barbara could still boast of having the biggest grapevine on earth, until this plant also succumbed to a disease of the roots, probably resulting from age, and its body now rests in the Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce. Its irregular trunk attained a girth of four feet and a half at eighteen inches above the ground, or five feet six inches at the height of forty-two inches, and its maximum yield was the magnificent load of four tons. It was believed to be seventy-five years old.

Still, California owns the world's record vine, for in the Carpentaria Valley is flourishing a third, which surpasses both the others in size. It was planted in 1842 by Joaquina Lugo de Ayala. Important incidental associations distinguish this glorious plant. The first election in Santa Barbara County under American rule was held beneath its ample shade.

This latest candidate for the world record is double from the surface of the ground up. The two parts are knit together in a David and Jonathan like embrace to a height of five feet seven inches, where they separate into two huge branches, the largest having a circumference of three feet. Six inches above the ground the vine measures eight feet five and a half inches in circumference, and it covers an area one hundred and fifteen feet square—no fewer than sixty posts supporting the framework. The owner says that were provision made it would cover a greater surface, but it is pruned every year.

Sensational tales are told every year of the grapes this vine produces. That it did actually yield ten tons in a recent season appears to be authentic.

FROM EVERYWHERE.

In the days of Columbus only seven metals were known to exist. Now there are fifty-one in use.

Persia has no distilleries, breweries, or public houses, and native wine is the only intoxicating beverage used.

Bricks made of coal dust are used for paving in Russia. The coal dust is combined with molasses and rosin.

The railway station at Galara, in Peru, 16,635 feet above sea level, is believed to be the highest human habitation in the world.

The Austrian courts have recently affirmed the principle first established in the United States that a typewritten will is legal.

Private bullfights are occasionally given by the very rich people in Madrid, and guests are invited to them as they would be to a dinner.

At Swedish weddings, among the middle and lower classes, the bridegroom carries a whip. This is an emblem of his authority in the domestic circle.

Rosewood and mahogany are so plentiful in Mexico that some of the copper mines there are timbered with rosewood, while mahogany is used as fuel for the engines.

The black apes of Guinea have long, silky hair, and their fur is admired for muffs and caps. During the past eight years 1,075,000 skins have been shipped to Paris.

Three indispensable accomplishments must be possessed by candidates for the police force in Vienna. They must understand telegraphy, be able to row a boat and swim.

When the straw hat first appeared in 1784, it was worn exclusively by women.

Among the poorest-paid workers in the whole of Europe are the Sicilian farm laborers, whose average weekly wage amounts to less than fifty cents.

The law placing a prohibitive tax on the manufacture and sale in the United States of matches containing white phosphorus became effective July 1.

The smallest bird is a Central American humming bird, about the size of a bluebottle fly.

A new concrete bridge at Allentown, Pa., though neither the highest nor the longest in the world, is said to contain the greatest amount of material.

Gold-filled teeth have been found in the jaws of skeletons in the ruins of ancient Pompeii.

A farm implement which does the work of a plow, disk, harrow and roller in a single trip over a field is a recent invention.

If a glass jar refuses to open set it down in an inch or two of hot water. Then the cover will yield to pressure.

A bubble in a window pane of a home in McPherson County concentrated the sun rays on a spot on a lace curtain and set it on fire.

The sun shining upon the heavy rolled edge of a glass fish bowl in a home in Mitchell County set a table runner on fire and the home burned.

ETCH POWDER.

Gee whiz! What fun you can have with this stuff. Moisten the tip of your finger, tap it on the contents of the box, and a little bit will stick. Then shake hands with your friend, or drop a speck down his back. In a minute he will feel as if he had the seven years' itch.

It will make him scratch, rear, squirm and make faces. But it is perfectly harmless, as it is made from the seeds of wild roses. The horrible itch stops in a few minutes, or can be checked immediately by rubbing the spot with a wet cloth. While it is working, you will be apt to laugh your suspender buttons off. The best joke of all. Price 10 cents a box, by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

GOOD LUCK BANKS.

Ornamental as well as useful. Made of highly nickelized brass. It holds just One Dollar. When filled it opens itself. Remains locked until refilled. Can be used as a watchcharm. Money refunded if not satisfied. Price, 10c. by mail.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

CACHOO OR SNEEZING POWDER.

The greatest fun-maker of them all. A small amount of this powder, when blown in a room, will cause everyone to sneeze without anyone knowing where it comes from. It is very light, will float in the air for some time, and penetrate every nook and corner of a room. It is perfectly harmless. Cachoo is put up in bottles, and one bottle contains enough to be used from 10 to 15 times. Price, by mail, 10c. each; 3 for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

LIGHTNING TRICK BOX.

A startling and pleasing illusion! "The ways of the world are devious," says Matthew Arnold, but the ways of the Lightning Trick Box when properly handled are admitted to be puzzling and uncertain. You take off the lid and show your friends that it is full of nice candy. Replace the lid, when you can solemnly assure your friends that you can instantly empty the box in their presence without opening it; and taking off the lid again, sure enough the candy has disappeared. Or you can change the candy into a piece of money by following the directions sent with each box. This is the neatest and best cheap trick ever invented.

Price, only 10c.; 3 for 25c., mailed, postpaid.

J. RANK SMITH, 388 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

LAUGHABLE EGG TRICK

This is the funniest trick ever exhibited and always produces roars of laughter. The performer says to the audience that he requires some eggs for one of his experiments. As no spectator carries any, he calls his assistant, taps him on top of the head, he gags, and an egg comes out of his mouth. This is repeated until six eggs are produced. It is an easy trick to perform, once you know how, and always makes a hit. Directions given for working it. Price, 25 cents by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

X-RAY WONDER

This is a wonderful little optical illusion. In use, you apparently see the bones in your hand, the hole in a pipe-stem, the lead in a pencil, etc. The principle on which it is operated cannot be disclosed here, but it will afford no end of fun for any person who has one. Price, 15 cents each, by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

VANISHING CIGAR.

This cigar is made in exact imitation of a good one. It is held by a rubber cord which, with the attached safety pin, is fastened on the inside of the sleeve. When offered to a friend, as it is about to be taken, it will instantly disappear.

Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

Ayvad's Water-Wings



Learn to swim by one trial

Price 25 cents, Postpaid

These water-wings take up no more room than a pocket-handkerchief. They weigh 3 ounces and support from 50 to 250 pounds. With a pair anyone can learn to swim or float. For use, you have only to wet them, blow them up, and press together the two rings near the mouthpiece.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

WHISTLEPHONE

This is one of the greatest musical instruments ever invented. It is made entirely of metal and is almost invisible when in use. With it, in a few moments, you can learn to play all kinds of tunes, have lots of fun, please and amuse your friends and make some money, too. Fine for either song or piano accompaniment or by itself alone. You place the whistlephone in the mouth with half circle out, place end of tongue to rounded part and blow gently as if to cool the lips. A few trials will enable one to play any tune or air.

Price 6 cents each by mail, post-paid
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

CARTER AEROPLANE No. 1.

Will fly on a horizontal line 150 feet! Can be flown in the house, and will not injure itself nor anything in the room. The most perfect little aeroplane made. The motive power is furnished by twisted rubber bands contained within the tubular body of the machine. It is actuated by a propeller at each end revolving in opposite directions. Variation in height may be obtained by moving the planes and the balance weight. It can be made to fly either to the right or the left by moving the balance sideways before it is released for flight. Price, 35c. each, delivered.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE JOKER'S CIGAR.

The biggest sell of the season. A real cigar made of tobacco, but secreted in the center of cigar about one-half inch from end is a fountain of sparklets. The moment the fire reaches this fountain hundreds of sparks of fire burst forth in every direction, to the astonishment of the smoker. The fire is stage fire, and will not burn the skin or clothing. After the fireworks the victim can continue smoking the cigar to the end. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c.; 1 dozen, 90c., mailed, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

SLIDE THE PENCIL.

The pencil that keeps them guessing. Made of wood and lead just like an ordinary pencil, but when your victim starts to write with it—presto! the lead disappears. It is so constructed that the slightest pressure on the paper makes the lead slide into the wood. Very funny and a practical joke.

Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid; 3 for 25c.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

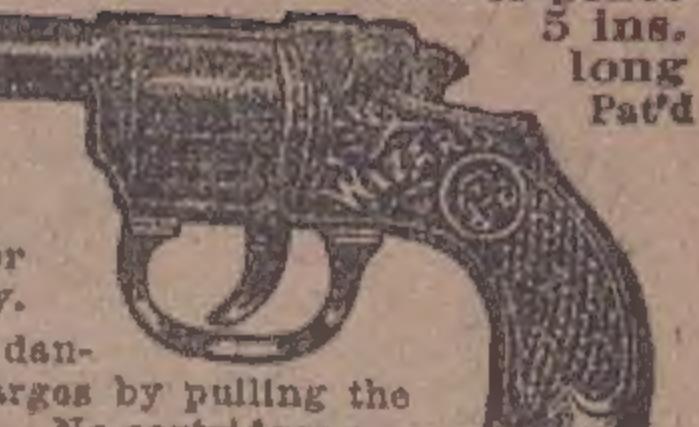
PIGGY IN A COFFIN.

This is a wicked pig that died at an early age, and here he is in his coffin ready for burial. There will be a great many mourners at his funeral, for this coffin, pretty as it looks, is very tricky, and the man who gets it open will feel real grief. The coffin is made of metal, perfectly shaped and beautifully lacquered. The trick is to open it to see the pig.

The man that tries it gets his fingers and feelings hurt, and piggy comes out to grunt at his victims. The tubular end of the coffin, which everyone (in trying to open) presses inward, contains a needle which stabs the victim in his thumb or finger every time. This is the latest and a very "impressive" trick. It can be opened easily by anyone in the secret, and as a neat catch-joke to save yourself from a bore is unsurpassed. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c., postpaid; one dozen by express, 75c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

Wizard Repeating LIQUID PISTOL



Nickel-plate
5 ins.
long
Pat'd

Will stop the most vicious dog (or man) without permanent injury.

Perfectly safe to carry without danger of leakage. Fires and recharges by pulling the trigger. Loads from any liquid. No cartridges required. Over 6 shots in one loading. All dealers, or by mail, 50c. Rubber-covered Holster, 10c. With Pistol, 55c. Money-order or Postage stamps. No coin.

PARKER, STEARNS & CO., 294 Sheffield Avenue, Dept. E, Brooklyn, N. Y.



VENTRILLOQUISM

Almost anyone can learn it at home. Small cost. Send to-day 2-cent stamp for particulars and proof. O. A. SMITH, Room 4115-828 Bigelow St., Peoria, Ill.

Old Coins

Wanted. \$1 to \$800 paid for hundreds of coins dated before 1836. Send 10c for our ill. strated coin value book, 4x7; get posted. Clark & Co., Box 95, Le Roy, N. Y.



The wonder of the 20th Century. Shows the bones in your fingers, lead in a pencil, &c., &c. You can see through clothes, even the flesh turns transparent and the bones can be seen. Very useful and instructive. The most interesting instrument ever invented. Think of the fun you can have with it. Complete X-Ray shipped, prepaid by mail upon receipt of 10c. X-RAY MFG. CO., Dept. 42, 26 E. 23d St., N. Y.

LOTS OF FUN



Ventriloquist Double Throat
Fits roof of mouth; always invisible; greatest thing yet. Astonish and mystify your friends. Neigh like a horse; whine like a puppy; sing like a canary, and imitate birds and beasts of the field and forest. Loads of fun. Wonderful invention. Thousands sold. Send a dime and a 2c stamp for one dozen.

DOUBLE THROAT CO., Dept. K, Frenchtown, N. J.

BLACK-EYE JOKE.

New and amusing Joke. The victim is told to hold the tube close to his eye so as to exclude all light from the back, and then to remove the tube until pictures appear in the center. In trying to locate the pictures he will receive the finest black-eye you ever saw. We furnish a small box of blackening preparation with each tube, so the joke can be used indefinitely. Those not in the trick will be caught every time. Absolutely harmless. Price by mail 15c. each; 2 for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE MAGIC DAGGER.

A wonderful illusion. To all appearances it is an ordinary dagger which you can flourish around in your hand and suddenly state that you think you have lived long enough and had better commit suicide, at the same time plunging the dagger up to the hilt into your breast or side, or you can pretend to stab a friend or acquaintance. Of course your friend or yourself are not injured in the least, but the deception is perfect and will startle all who see it.

Price, 10c., or 3 for 25c. by mail, postpaid. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

TRICK PUZZLE PURSE.

The first attempt usually made to open it, is to press down the little knob in the center of the purse, when a small needle runs out and stabs them in the finger, but does not open it. You can open it before their eyes and still they will be unable to open it.

Price, 25c. each by mail, postpaid. H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

MANY TOOL KEY RING.

The wonder of the age. The greatest small tool in the world. In this little instrument you have in combination seven useful tools embracing Key Ring, Pencil Sharpener, Nail Cutter and Cleaner, Watch Opener, Cigar Clipper, Letter Opener and Screw Driver. It is not a toy, but a useful article, made of cutlery steel, tempered and highly nickelized. Therefore will carry an edge the same as any piece of cutlery. As a useful tool, nothing has ever been offered to the public to equal it. Price, 15c., mailed, postpaid.

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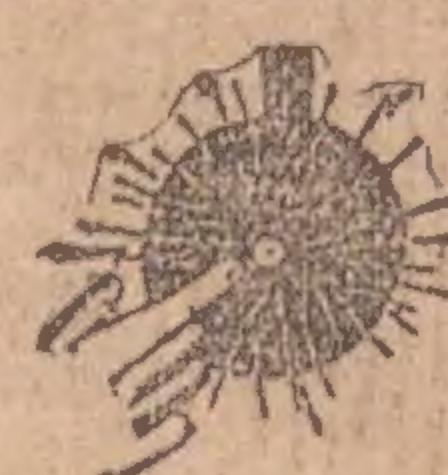
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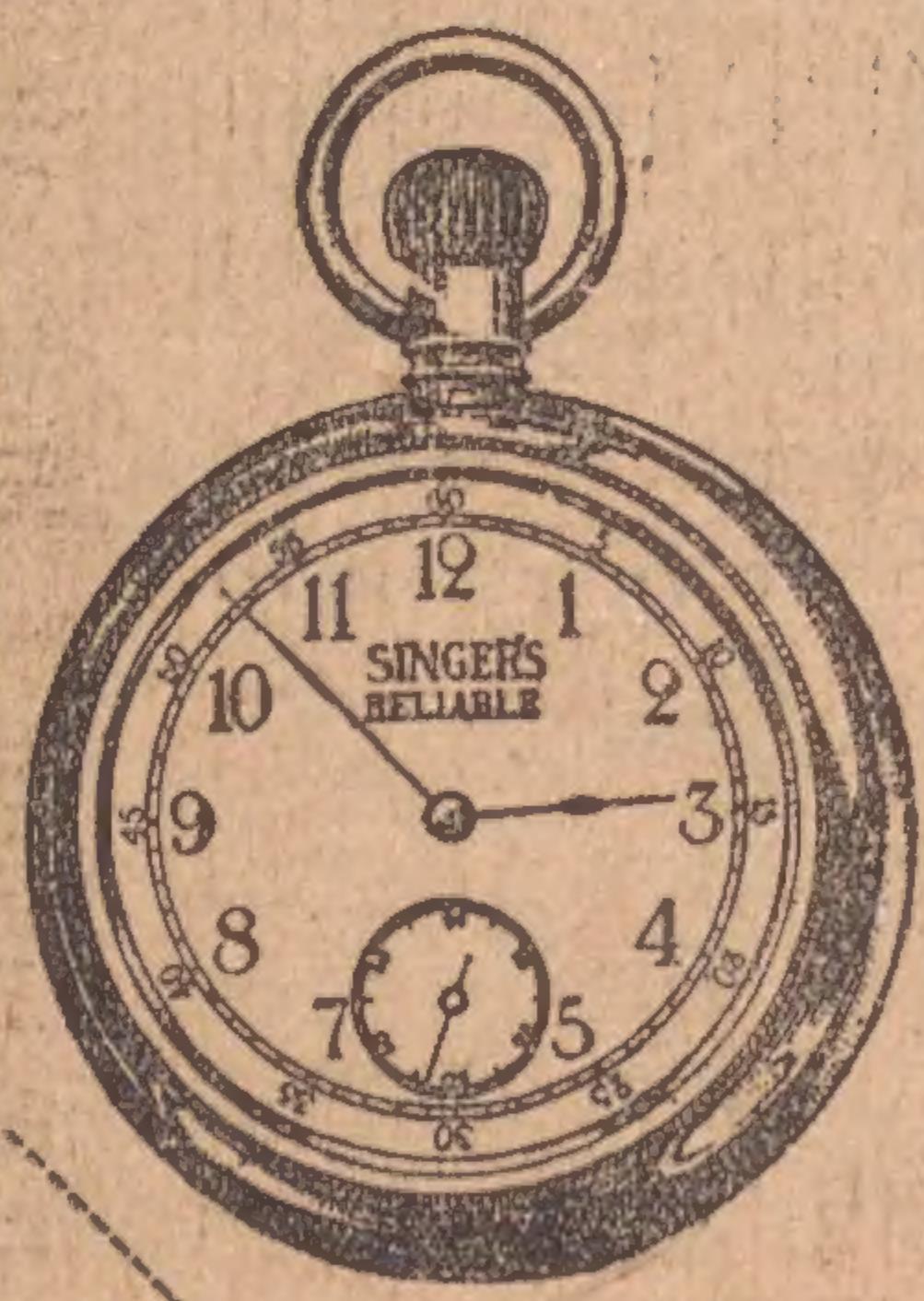
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